

A
COMPENDIUM
OF THE
SYSTEM OF DIVINE TRUTH,
CONTAINED
IN A SERIES OF ESSAYS,
IN WHICH
THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS CONTAINED
IN THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES,
ARE CAREFULLY ARRANGED, BRIEFLY DISCUSSED,
AND IMPROVED.



BY JACOB CATLIN, D. D.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN NEW-MARLBOROUGH, MASS.



“What is truth?”.....*Pontius Pilate.*

MIDDLETOWN.

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L. S.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the ninth day of July, A. D. 1818, and in the forty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, JACOB CATLIN, of the said District, has deposited in this Office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:

“ A Compendium of the System of Divine Truth : contained in a Series of Essays ; in which the principal subjects contained in the Holy Scriptures, are carefully arranged, briefly discussed, and improved. By Jacob Catlin, A. M.; Pastor of a Church in New-Marlborough, (Massachusetts.) ‘ What is truth?’ Pontius Pilate.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “ An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned :” and also to an Act entitled, “ An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, an Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.”

JOHN W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

INTRODUCTION.



It is with no small degree of diffidence, that the author of this Compendium has undertaken, and prosecuted a work so important and so arduous; and for the correctness of which, especially in point of sentiment, he is so highly responsible, both to the christian public, and to Christ himself. Considering, however, the deplorable ignorance of Theology, and particularly of the systematic connection of the great truths contained in the scriptures, which is manifest in all ranks of people, even in this enlightened part of the world: and considering how few there are, who have ability to purchase, and time and patience to read, the voluminous systems of Theology which are extant; it has been deemed important, that a *Compendium* of this kind, embracing all the leading articles of divine truth, and exhibiting the evidence in their support; together with suitable remarks and improvement; should be published for the particular benefit of the common people; and more especially *for the benefit of those who emigrate from the old settlements of our country*, and spend a number of years in the wilderness, in a great measure destitute of regular and systematic instruction in religion, before they are able to support the ministry of the gospel.

In stating the usefulness and importance of a summary of christian doctrine and practice, a venerable author makes the following remarks; that "There are many, in every age, and in all places, who are so destitute of a sense of the importance of religion, that they would never attend to the sacred scriptures, with that degree of engagedness, which is necessary, to collect from them any thing like a system of doctrines. But, by the aid of a compendium of the doc-

trines and duties of the gospel, accurately drawn up, with scripture proofs; they may, in a short time, arrive at the knowledge of every important truth. And, most certainly, it would greatly assist such as have an inquisitive turn of mind."

Another important benefit to be expected, from a compendium of the system of divine truth, is, that it greatly tends to excite those who have been most inattentive to the scriptures, and to all religious books, to read, from curiosity, those important truths, which they could never be persuaded to read, from a sense of duty. In this way, the minds of many stupid sinners may be drawn, by insensible degrees, to a solemn attention to the bible.

Another benefit of a well arranged compendium is, that it leads the mind of the reader to think and reason *systematically*, on religious subjects, as well as on all other subjects. It is only for want of due attention, and the proper means of aiding the minds of men, in theological inquiries, that so many people, of good natural abilities, are led to view the bible as a *book of miscellanies*, incoherent, if not inconsistent, in its several parts. The particular form, in which the bible is published to the world, is, indeed, somewhat miscellaneous; but not more so than might have been expected, considering the circumstances of its publication. The holy scriptures were written in different ages of the world, by about thirty different hands, on a vast variety of different subjects and occasions, and without the least appearance of concert or combination. Under these circumstances, it was not to be expected, that the bible should be produced in exact systematic order. Yet, wonderful as it may appear, it contains *all* the materials of a perfect system of doctrinal and practical religion. Now, therefore, to discover in one general view, by the aid of a well digested *summary*, the intimate connection of such an immense variety of important subjects, as are scattered throughout the sacred volume; must

be very profitable, as well as pleasing to the pious and contemplative mind.

Accordingly, we add, that a compendium of divine truth is calculated, not only to enlighten the ignorant, and arrest the attention of the stupid and profane; but also to increase the comforts and joys of real christians. When the foundation of all their hopes is discovered, in one comprehensive view, it is calculated greatly to excite their joy, and to confirm their faith and hope in the divine promises.

It may be further added, that a good arrangement, and a brief discussion of the interesting subjects contained in the bible, are highly important, not only for the instruction of the ignorant, and for the edification of the saints; but also for the conviction of sceptics and infidels. For the connection and harmony of the scriptures afford substantial proof of their divine original. And no where else, but in the bible, can be found a system of theology and religion, which is connected and consistent in all its parts. But such is the connection and harmony of the system contained in the bible, that all who candidly attend to the matter, feel constrained, either to embrace the whole, or to reject the whole. But where is the man, who admits the being of a God, and yet dares to discard all the doctrines and precepts of the bible? Deists and free thinkers, who generally profess to embrace *a part*, and reject *a part* of the sacred scriptures, when they are led to discern the inseparable connection of the whole, find themselves confounded. From the common ground of infidelity, they are driven, either to embrace the system of revealed truth, or the baseless doctrines of atheism. The system of divine truth needs but only to be seen, in its connection, *as a system*, to commend itself to every man's conscience. Pains have been taken, in forming this compendium, to address the consciences of the readers, by a simple manifestation of divine truth, rather than to gratify their taste and fancy, by any embellishments of style.

The author is aware of the different shades of opinion on several subjects even among the orthodox; and that this should make him diffident, rather than dogmatical. His aim has been not to shun a declaration of all the counsel of God; and at the same time, not to assume the airs of an antagonist.

If, by a laborious and prayerful discussion of all the leading subjects contained in the scriptures, this work should be thought useful, and should prove acceptable, in general, to serious and candid minds; the hopes and expectations of the author will be abundantly answered; and he may cherish the rich and precious consolation, that "His labour has not been in vain in the Lord."

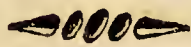
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A COMPENDIUM
OF THE
SYSTEM OF DIVINE TRUTH.



ESSAY I.

Evidence of the being of a God.

By a God is meant an intelligent being, who is infinite, self-existent, immutable, omnipotent, and holy; a being, who is the cause of all things, but who is himself uncaused and eternal. And, that such a being exists, by a necessity of nature, however mysterious his existence may appear, is made evident by several arguments.

1. The existence of God is evident from our own existence, and from the existence of the whole visible universe. Thus reasons the Apostle Paul, to prove the point before us: "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." That we ourselves, and all things which we behold, had a Maker, had a cause adequate to their production, is a very clear dictate of reason. Common sense, in early childhood, as well as in advanced age, is always led to infer a cause from a view of its effects. All things which we behold are evidently mutable, and dependent; and consequently finite. Even the intellectual as well as the material system, so far as it falls under our notice, is mutable and dependent. Our minds, as well as our bodies, are subject to numberless changes, which proves that they are finite and dependent; and that they are not causes, but effects; implying an antecedent cause. We observe further,

It is, in the nature of things, impossible for any thing to be its own cause. This would imply an agency prior to the existence of the agent; which is an absurdity. Also, to suppose that the visible system of finite beings and things, sprang out of nothing by accident, without any cause whatever, would subvert all reasoning from effect

to cause ; and would be an affront to common sense and experience.

To suppose that the universe which we behold is uncaused, uncreated and eternal ; and has passed through an infinite series of changes and revolutions ; is a gross absurdity. For the idea of a series and succession, implies a beginning, progress, and variation ; which is inconsistent with all order and stability ; and indeed inconsistent with the idea of causation. Whatever exists by an eternal necessity of nature, admits of no change, *no variableness, nor shadow of turning*. Reasoning therefore from effect to cause, which is a legitimate and conclusive mode of reasoning, we come clearly to the conclusion, that there must have been, by a necessity of nature, an eternal, self-existent, immutable and omnipotent being, who is the cause of all things ; and who will be found, in the sequel, to be, of necessity, infinitely holy. This glorious being is called GOD, THE LORD, OR JEHOVAH.

From the nature of this argument, it is manifest, that the great cause of all things is an *intelligent being*. For how is it possible, that a being void of intelligence, should produce intelligence in others ? It is indeed absurd to suppose, that a material being can produce an immaterial. How can the earth produce a man ? Or even a beast ? It is as contrary to reason to suppose that inert, lifeless matter can be the cause of intelligence, as to suppose, that nothing can be the cause of something. In mere matter, there is evidently, no intelligence ; of course, no agency, no efficiency, in the production of any thing.

2. The being of a God is very evident, not only from the existence of the heavens and the earth, and all creatures and things in the universe, as being the effects of infinite power and intelligence ; but also from the *manner*, in which all things have been produced, preserved and improved. In the creation and disposal of all creatures and things, and of mankind in particular ; there are such manifestations of infinitely wise design and contrivance, as demonstrate the being, and the leading attributes of God. Man is truly said to be *fearfully and wonderfully made* ; and infinitely important are the purposes to be answered by his creation. He created all things to the intent “ that now unto the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the mani-

fold wisdom of God." How marvellous are the effects of infinitely wise design and contrivance, in the works, by which God makes himself known to a sinful and benighted world! and even to those who say in their hearts, "*There is no God!*" Truly there is a God, "who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." And, for any to suppose, that the countless millions of animal and rational beings in this world, all furnished with the means of subsistence and self-defence, and all adapted and directed to the most important purposes, have come into existence and operation by chance; is altogether unreasonable and absurd. Of chance, there can be no distinct idea. It is altogether chimerical. It excludes all idea of agency or causality; and is a mere nonentity. But such is the order, harmony, and beauty of what are called the works of creation and providence; so bright are the footsteps of infinitely wise design, in all the events which take place before our eyes; that we are led to exclaim with the Psalmist, "*Verily, He is a God, who judgeth in the earth.*" Pertinent to the present inquiry is the celebration of the wisdom, power and glory of the Lord, by the holy Psalmist. Speaking of the works of creation and providence, he exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships, there is that Leviathan which thou hast made to play therein. These all wait upon thee, that thou mayst give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather. Thou openest thine hand; they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face; they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath; they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord endureth for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works."

Thus evidently it appears that there is a God, from the *manner* in which all things take place, and from the manifestations of infinite wisdom and power, which are made, not only in the production of all creatures and things; but in their direction to the most important ends and purposes. The very existence of effects is a demonstration of an adequate cause: and if the effects be glorious, such also

must be the cause. As the visible heavens are glorious ; so “ the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.”

3. In the view of candid and pious minds, in particular, the bible itself, considered as an effect, and an effect which man could not produce ; is a demonstration of the being of a God. Aside from all the testimonies of the bible, to this great truth, the very nature, tendency and effects of the book itself are sufficient. A book so full of wisdom and knowledge, so pure and holy, so hostile to the corruptions of the human heart, could never have been the effect of human efforts. The efforts of natural men are indeed uniformly in opposition to the bible. But, were the most candid and learned men, to make their utmost exertions to form a bible, they would utterly fail for lack of wisdom and knowledge. To form such a book, and give it credit and influence, in this wicked world, as far exceeds the wisdom and power of man, as to create a world. If the heavens declare the existence and glory of the Lord ; the scriptures do it more abundantly. They declare a holy law, and a holy gospel. They reveal truths, which man could never have discovered ; and to which the human heart is violently opposed. The scriptures establish that wisdom, which even some of the most wise and learned men call foolishness. For the bible contains the gospel revelation, which is a stumbling-block as well as foolishness. The nature of the bible is to exalt God, and to abase the hearts of sinful men. It considers men as being dead in trespasses and sins, and under the curse of the law ; and as depending on the blood of atonement for pardon and salvation. It promises no reward for the best deeds of the unregenerate. On the whole, it exhibits a system of religion, perfectly obnoxious to every natural heart. And it declares, in plain terms, that “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Now if there had been no God, no being infinitely wise, powerful and holy ; how could such a book as this have been invented and imposed on mankind, as a divine revelation ? Had mankind embraced a forgery for their bible, it would have been of a nature very different from the bible which we possess.

The same evidence of the existence and agency of the Deity, is derived from the *effects* of the bible. Contrary to all human calculation or conjecture, the bible has produced effects most extensive, powerful, and salutary. In whatever age, nation, or society, it has been embraced heartily, as the system of divine truth, and the only rule of faith and practice; the effects have been most precious. But, had there been no God, no divine influence; no superintending providence; how could any blessed and happy effects have been produced by the bible? How could the scriptures, and they only, have produced a state of civilization among barbarians? How could they ever have produced a conviction of sin; and a conversion of the heart to Christ, and to the doctrines of the cross?

Such are the nature and effects of the holy scriptures, as prove, to the full satisfaction of all serious and candid minds, that there is a supreme and infinite Being, who is the cause of all things; and that there is a universal, superintending providence over all the events of the universe. The bible is as evidently the workmanship of an infinitely wise, holy and omnipotent God, as the temple of Solomon was the workmanship of wise, skilful and faithful artificers. Did not mankind say in their hearts, "there is no God," no man, with the bible in his hands, could possibly be an atheist. For, in every sacred page, the true God is made manifest.

4. Had there been no God, it is very certain, considering the natural disposition of the human heart, that no man would ever have believed in a God. The whole human race, in all generations, would have been atheists; and this on just and rational ground. For, in this case, there would not have been a single argument, of any weight, to prove the existence of a God. Error is, in no measure, supported by rational argument. If there be no God, then all the seeming arguments which have been produced, and which can be produced, to prove the being of a God, are but mere sophistry. And since mankind are so strongly bent on atheism, as to say in their hearts, "*There is no God;*" and so subtile and ingenious, as they are found to be, to evade the evidence of his existence; we may be certain, that if there were no God, no man would be in the least danger of believing, obeying or trusting in any god whatever. Of sinful men it is said, "God is not in all their thoughts;" and "they do not

like to retain God in their knowledge." What then could induce mankind, without the most forcible evidence, to believe in the existence of a God?

5. We are therefore led to conclude, that the almost universal belief in one or more gods, by men of all characters, and of all ages, is a strong proof of the being of a God. Traditions, and maxims in religion, however vague and fabulous, have their foundation in some important realities. Mere fictions, grow out of certain matters of fact: so that the most corrupt and idolatrous notions of the Deity, as well as the most rational and correct, serve as a proof of the being of a God.

REMARKS.

Having found abundant evidence of the being of a God, who is the first cause of all things; the Almighty Creator and Governor of the universe; who is the Father of our spirits and the former of our bodies; in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways; we are led to realize the importance of glorifying him as God. Such is the stupidity and atheism of the human heart, that mankind in general, are very little influenced by the consideration, or even by *the belief* of the existence of a God. They even dare to blaspheme his sacred name. "In works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

It is certainly rational, and highly important, that those who have believed in God, should be careful not only to maintain good works; but also to worship him and glorify his name. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If I then be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." Doubtless the Most High God, who is the possessor of heaven and earth, acts with a supreme regard to his own honour and glory; and with a suitable regard to the welfare of his rational creatures. Doubtless, "the Judge of all the earth doth right." With great reason and propriety, therefore, does he demand of all his rational creatures, their tribute of honour and glory. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever.—Amen."

ESSAY II.

The inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

IN the foregoing Essay, we have attended to the first, and the fundamental article in the system of divine truth. Evidence has been given of the existence of a supreme, eternal, and immutable being, who is called God. And, that we may be the more abundantly furnished with arguments, in the discussion and proof of all the following articles of the system of divine truth, it is proposed, in the next place, to prove *the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.*

That mankind, on many accounts, stand in very great need of a revelation from God, is generally granted, by those who are favored with the holy scriptures; and has been conceded, by many of the most candid and inquisitive, even among the heathen. The wisest of men, in every age and nation, have found by experience, and, in their writings, have frankly acknowledged, that, without a clear and infallible revelation from God, no man, in this sinful and benighted state, can know his character and will; nor can any man know his own state and character. Such is the ignorance of mankind, *because of the blindness of their hearts*, that not one can be found, who is able, by the light of nature, to suggest a ground of hope for sinners. It is impossible for man to decide, by his own reasonings, whether God can, on any ground, be propitious to the guilty. Or indeed, whether there is, or is not, a future and eternal state of reward and punishment. Untaught of God, the sober and reflecting part of mankind must, of necessity, be in a state of great darkness, doubt and dependency. Well may they despairingly cry, "Who will shew us any good?" who can give us any light, on subjects infinitely important? At the same time,

We observe, that there is an impression on the minds of mankind in general, that the Deity is good; that he is kind and merciful: and that he is willing to enlighten and instruct his rational creatures.

Some indeed have held to the doctrine of two supreme beings, one good, and the other evil: one the author of all good, and the other the author of all evil. But this is

generally, and justly considered as an absurdity. The general impression on the human mind is, that *the Lord is good*; and that he is disposed, in his own time and way, to enlighten the world, by an infallible divine revelation.

From these two considerations, that mankind stand in perishing need of instruction from God; and that He is kindly disposed to give them instruction; we have strong presumptive evidence, that there is, somewhere, an infallible revelation from God. But where is this revelation to be found? Do we find it in the Koran? No. In the books of heathen mythology? No. Where then, except in the bible, do we find a divine revelation? Certainly nowhere at all.

It remains now to be proved distinctly, from various sources of argument, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God. The evidences of this important truth are various; and it is conceived, they are conclusive. The evidences to be adduced, are *external and internal*. As an external evidence, we may state,

1. The vast number and variety of miracles which have been wrought in the name, and by the power and authority of God; and expressly, for the confirmation of his word, and his truth.

A miracle is a supernatural work of God; or a work, by which the laws of nature, so called, are suspended or controlled. It is not only a work, which, like the works of creation and providence, exceeds all finite power and wisdom; but a work which counteracts the most common operations of divine power and wisdom. When the rod of Moses became a serpent, and was presently restored to a rod in his hand; a miracle was wrought. When, by stretching forth his rod, according to divine direction, Moses brought upon Egypt all the successive plagues, till the first-born of man and beast were destroyed; and till their king and armies were overwhelmed in the Red Sea; and when the sea itself was divided, for the safe passage of the Israelites; and for their escape from the armies of Egypt; *miracles were wrought*. It is folly to allege, as some do, that these astonishing events were effected by the skill and power of magic. For the magicians themselves were sufferers in the plagues; and they acknowledged the finger of God, in the plague of lice. Now, is it possible to suppose, that all these things were the effect

of magic, or of mere deception, and cunning craftiness? For this is all that is meant by magic. Will any one imagine, that the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, which was an infallible guide to Israel forty years in the wilderness; and which led them to the land of promise, was the effect of magic? If all these were the effects of magic; then the world is governed by magic. By this the people were furnished in the wilderness, with the daily supply of manna. By this the rock was cleft at Horeb, and the waters gushed out, and flowed by the side of their camp, in all that barren desert. If all these, and all other miraculous events have been produced by magic; then magic has created the world, and is the true God. Yet it is granted by all, that magic is a mere deception, and has been thus considered in all ages. But, certainly, something more than human deception, and cunning craftiness, was manifested in the miracles of Moses and the prophets.

Do any doubt the facts related, concerning the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and their journey to the land of promise? As well may they doubt the existence of such a nation as the Israelites. But the nation, with most of its peculiarities, still exists, though scattered and dispersed; and never was there a nation or people, more attentive to their records and genealogies. The facts related are indubitable. And, surely, none but the Almighty could perform these miraculous works. All were wrought to vindicate the authority of Moses, who was commissioned to deliver the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Under the same divine commission he wrote the books ascribed to him in the scriptures. Have we not then as great an assurance of the truth of these books of Moses, as the Israelites had of the truth of his declarations?

Respecting all the miraculous works of which we have any account in the scriptures, it is to be considered, that they are displays of the supernatural power of God, for a confirmation of his word, and a vindication of his authority. Now is it not absurd, and inconsistent with the perfections of the Holy One of Israel, to suppose that He would perform miraculous works in support of falsehood and wickedness? Would he take measures to destroy his own holy kingdom? Or to destroy the confidence of his friends?

It is well worthy of notice, that miracles have always been considered by the Jews, and perhaps by all but modern infidels, as a test of divine truth, and divine authority. Nicodemus declared the common sentiment of the Jews, in his address to our Saviour; "We know, that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles that thou dost, except God be with him." When Christ had raised Lazarus from the dead, and wrought many other miracles, in the presence of the multitude; "Then gathered the chief priests and the pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come," (as Christ had prophesied,) "and take away both our place and nation." The same Jewish council was thrown into perplexity by the miracle wrought upon the lame man, at the gate of the temple. "What shall we do to these men?" said the venerable council; "for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." Of course, they could not deny the divine power and authority of Christ, and his apostles. Thus it was acknowledged, by the enemies as well as the friends of Christ, that miracles were wrought, and that they afforded an ample evidence of the truths, which they were wrought to confirm. But every page of the bible has been supported by this kind of evidence. Almost innumerable have been the particular and temporary miracles, wrought for the confirmation of certain divine truths, or for the vindication of particular divine claims. There are also *standing miracles*; such as the preservation of God's ancient covenant people, in all their sojournings, captivities, dispersions, and calamities; and the preservation, enlargement, and prosperity of the christian church, under all her persecutions and distresses. It is by a standing miracle, that we realize, in part, and anticipate more fully, the restoration of Israel to their long lost inheritance of the land of promise; together with a fulness of accession from the gentile nations, in the fulfilment of sacred prophecy. By the same standing miracle, "The earth shall be, *ultimately*, filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas." Thus, by miracles, the divine inspiration of the scriptures is, in the view of candid minds, unquestionably proved:

2. Another external evidence is derived from the exact fulfilment of scripture prophecies. "For the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But how does this appear? It appears from the matter and circumstances of the prophecies, compared with their fulfilment. The prophecies were delivered, not with any pretence to foreknowledge; but altogether in the style of a divine revelation. "*Thus saith the Lord,*" was all that the prophets pretended to know; and, in many instances, they probably understood but very imperfectly, the subjects of their own prophecies. And the things predicted, which were best understood, were, in human view, very improbable; many of them depending on the voluntary agency of people who were, as yet, unborn. Another circumstance of the scripture prophecies is, that they are exceedingly numerous; and relate to the events of all ages, and all nations. Of course, many of them must have been delivered several thousand years before their fulfilment. The most of the prophecies relate to Christ and his church; and this being the case, the fulfilment must, as we have found, depend on thousands of miracles. But who could foretel what it would be the will of God to do, in a way of miracles, for his redeemed church? Under all these circumstances, it is manifest, that if men have uttered none but true and correct prophecies, they "*have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" But, that hundreds of correct prophecies, respecting the incarnation, works, sufferings, exaltation and triumph of Christ; and respecting the rise, progress, sufferings, and ultimate glory of his church; as well as respecting the rise and fall of the nations and empires of the world; admits not the shadow of a doubt. For it is increasingly evident, that, as fast as events can succeed one another, all the prophecies are or will be fulfilled. Who but the omniscient God, could foresee the most singular events respecting Abraham and his seed? and, that from him should proceed the Messiah, who should be *cut off, but not for himself*? Without the spirit of prophecy, who could measure the time of the advent and sufferings of Christ? Who but God himself, could foretel the rise, character, progress, duration and downfall of papal Rome? And who could describe, with such exactness, the universal dispersion of the infidel

Jews? and their final and glorious restoration? But, that all these things, and many more, have been foretold, in the ancient ages of the world, as well as in the time of Christ and his apostles, cannot be denied.

The evidence from prophecy, of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures, is rapidly increasing. The events of every year are a more and more clear fulfilment of ancient prophecy. The state of the Jews, for instance, is more and more clearly seen to be such as has been long pointed out in prophecy. They are beginning to set their faces towards Mount Zion. They begin to favour the reading of the New Testament. Individuals begin to preach the gospel successfully, to their deluded brethren. Soon will their restoration and conversion to Christ, as clearly accomplish the prophecies, as their captivity and dispersion. Another prophecy, remarkably fulfilling at this day, is, that God will give unto his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And how wonderful it is, that, while all the antichristian nations are passed by, and given over to their abominable idolatries; the greatest exertions are made, and successfully made, to send the missionaries of the cross, with the bible in their hands, to the most benighted heathen nations! Do we not see *another angel*, an extra angel, at this day, fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people? And does there not follow yet another angel, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city?" Papal Rome is evidently falling to the ground; and the heathen nations are gathering round the standard of the Redeemer. These remarkable prophecies, being now fulfilling before our eyes, afford us the clearest evidence, that they, and all the prophecies and all the scriptures, were given by inspiration of God.

To say, that such a multitude of predictions are nothing but human conjectures, is to say what no candid man can believe. For, in the common affairs of life, human conjectures are, most generally, found by experience to be groundless.

If any say, that pretended prophecies are but a mere history of events, after they had taken place; let them inform the world when, and by whom this history was

written. We know the origin of the Koran ; and of the books of heathen Mythology. We know the origin of the antiquities of Josephus, and of all other writings of any considerable notoriety. How can there be any doubt, respecting the more interesting and important writings of the prophets ? These have been constantly in the hands of the Jews, read in their temple and synagogues, every sabbath day ; and they have always been regarded as the true history, and the *records* of the nation. If these writings had been a forgery, there would certainly have been a detection ; for the Jews and Christians have always kept a jealous eye on each other, and have critically guarded every word and letter of the Old Testament. If the prophecies had been a forgery, how could they have been palmed on that enlightened nation, any more than a similar forgery could now be palmed on our nation ? It is certainly unreasonable to conceive, that the great system of prophecy, which has been, and now is, so strikingly fulfilled, was written as a mere history of past events. “ We have,” undoubtedly, “ a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” And it is evident from the scriptures, that the design of prophecy was, to establish the whole system of revealed truth. For if the prophecies of scripture are divinely inspired, so is every other branch of scripture. For the prophecies were designed as a confirmation of the whole.

We now proceed to a discussion of the *internal* evidence of the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Evidence of this kind is various ; and we may notice a number of particular arguments.

1. The holiness and purity of the doctrines and laws of the bible, afford a powerful argument of its divine original. That *the whole world lieth in wickedness*, is a fact so glaringly evident, that few are found to dispute it. The hearts of men are deeply corrupted and depraved ; *fully set in them to do evil*. Selfishness is, manifestly the governing principle in the human heart. Where then can we look for a system of holy doctrines and laws, except to the inspiration of a holy and righteous God ? In the bible, we find a system of religion and morality, perfectly pure and holy ; perfectly diverse from all other systems, which are acknowledged to be of human invention. The

basis and substance of this system are contained in two great commands, viz. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; and thy neighbour as thyself." Whence originated these holy commands? They counteract the feelings of every natural heart; and of course could not have been a human invention. No sinful being could ever be disposed to bind himself and others to a rule, which is the abhorrence of his heart. But, that these commands are holy, just, and good, must be acknowledged. No man of a correct and well informed conscience, can utter a cavil against them. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good." From whom but God himself could such a law proceed? But, as the law, which is the basis of all religion, is holy; so also is the gospel: so are all the doctrines of the holy scriptures. All are *doctrines, which are according to godliness*. Most evidently, the bible, which is holy, is given by divine inspiration.

2. The scriptures were written, either by very honest, virtuous and candid men, as appears, by the previous argument, to have been the case; or else by the vilest impostors, whose object it was to play the hypocrite. But if the scriptures are a mere forgery, it is absurd to suppose, that they were written by good men. And since they evidently contain a system of holy laws and doctrines, and are perfectly offensive to the wicked heart; it is hardly supposeable, that they were written by wicked men, unless their minds were controlled by divine influence; and, in this case, it amounts, like the prophecy of Balaam, to a divine revelation. Generally speaking, if not universally, when wicked men invent systems of religion, their systems, like their hearts, are *corrupt and wicked systems*. They are grounded in selfishness. On the whole, we see not how it was probable, or even possible, that a system of religion, evidently holy, could have been produced, without divine inspiration.

3. Another internal evidence of the divine inspiration of the scriptures is, that the whole system is harmonious. The variety of style and manner of writing, is an evidence that it was written by various hands, at different periods of the world, and under different forms of government. But however various the manner is, the matter is the same. In doctrines, laws, history, predictions, pro-

mises, threatenings, there is perfect harmony. Fifteen hundred years elapsed, while additions were made, by Moses and the prophets, and the Apostles of Christ, to the canon of scripture. The work was performed by about thirty different hands; and evidently, without any particular concert among themselves. Yet a perfect harmony runs through the whole. Old Testament and New, look to the same great objects. They exhibit the same God, the same plan of atonement and forgiveness of sin, the same church, the same faith, the same heaven and hell. The points established by one of the writers, are established by the others. Who can account for this wonderful harmony of the scriptures, but by the infallible guidance of divine inspiration?

It has always been found impossible for any number of authors, aided only by human wisdom, to harmonize among themselves. Nor can the wisest of christians perfectly agree in their explanation of the scriptures. It is evident, from universal observation, that perfect harmony of sentiment, among blind and sinful men, cannot exist without the controlling influence of the Spirit of truth. "When he, the spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."

4. Some of the most sublime and important subjects contained in the bible, could never have been suggested to the minds of mankind, without a revelation from God. For they are, and continue to be perfect mysteries. Who could have invented, and enforced on proud and sinful men, the doctrine of the Trinity in unity of the Godhead, as laying the only consistent foundation of the great work of redemption? Of all mysteries, this is one of the most sublime, and not the least important. It is a cardinal doctrine in the christian system. Who could have discovered, without a spirit of prophecy, that the Son of God, who is *God manifest in the flesh*, must suffer and die, to atone for the sins of the world? "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Who but God ever revealed any thing, which, in its nature, was mysterious? For instance, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment of the world. In the view of unbelievers, the resurrection is a subject of mockery and ridicule;

and so are all other mysteries. But, without a revelation from God, the most important subjects must have been, to this day, involved in profound mystery.

Very scanty indeed, are the bounds of human knowledge and comprehension! It is evident, therefore, that, independent of a divine revelation, mankind can never attain to that knowledge of God, which is essential to the hope of final happiness.

5. It is no inconsiderable argument of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, that owing to the weight and solemnity of the subjects, as well as to the manner in which they are treated, *they command attention*. Other books may be read with avidity, and with deserved admiration: but how soon do they become trite and uninteresting! comparatively speaking, they take but little hold of the conscience, or the heart. The bible is the book affording the most durable entertainment. It becomes more and more interesting, the more it is perused, even by those, whose hearts are opposed to its sentiments. There is a kind of solemn and irresistible charm in the sacred oracles, which arrests attention; and is frequently instrumental of melting the rocky heart. "Is not thy word like fire, and like the hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" — "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." These are the testimonies of scripture, expressing, however, what are well known matters of fact. Now therefore, is it not absurd to suppose, that the scriptures, which produce such astonishing and glorious effects, are a mere human invention? Every attentive and candid mind, while reading the holy scriptures, feels an impression, which cannot be produced, by any other reading whatsoever. If therefore, the scriptures were the production of any mere man; he must have been far superior to any other man; and even to the angels of light. For the scriptures, doubtless, exhibit *things which the angels desire to look into*. Who then, and where is the man, that invented the holy scriptures? and that had influence enough to make the most enlightened part of mankind believe, that they were the oracles of God? and, as such, had been received and acknowledged, by a long line of ancestors? And where is

the man, who could attach to his own inventions, such an overwhelming influence, as to control the hearts of friends and foes? The *attention* which the scriptures command, is a powerful evidence of their divine inspiration. The gospel of Christ is well said to be "*the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.*"

6. Another internal evidence of the divine inspiration of the scriptures is, that the religion, founded on them alone, endures, and outlives all opposition. No book was ever hated and opposed so much as the bible; and yet none was ever so abundantly published and read by all classes of people. It endures the opposition of heathen and infidels; and is, at this day, rising in reputation, both in the christian and heathen world. Hundreds of men are employed as translators and printers of the scriptures, for the benefit of the destitute, and of the heathen. To facilitate the great work of evangelizing the world, *bible societies* are formed in every part of christendom. And they are, in a measure, favoured, even by Catholics and Jews. All other forms of religion fail; but that of the bible is triumphant. The very existence, preservation, and rising estimation of the scriptures, can be owing to nothing short of divine power and influence. But it is absurd to suppose, that the Most High and Holy God would afford his special aid to protect and promote a forgery.

7. The candor, frankness, and impartiality of the writers of the bible, are remarkable. They notice, without reserve, all the faults and imperfections of the church, and of the best characters which they describe. Some of the writers state their *own* faults, without the least palliation. Thus did Moses, and David, and Paul. Now is it possible to suppose, that impostors, or any but men of the most approved honesty and integrity, were the writers of the scriptures? But if they were honest men, they were divinely inspired. For this was what they claimed. Their current style was, "Thus saith the Lord."

8. The bible illuminates this ignorant and benighted world; and this proves that the author is divine. Most evidently the bible is *a light which shines in a dark place*. That which we call the word of God, is "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." Does not every conscience testify, that there is more valuable light, of every kind, communicated from the scriptures, than from all

other sources? Are not the *christian nations* far more enlightened, both speculatively and spiritually, than the heathen and mahometan nations? Is it not a fact, that as many of the heathen as cordially receive and obey the scriptures, are by them greatly enlightened? Is it not a fact, that poor naked starving Hottentots, who had long dwelt in dens and caves of the earth, have been, of late, called out of their filthy dens and burrows, into civilized life, by the joyful sound of the gospel? And from these depths of darkness, where the name of a God has been scarcely known, have not a great number become the sober intelligent followers of Jesus Christ? and have not even a goodly number become the preachers of his gospel? Does not the bible have an illuminating effect upon the minds of mankind? What other source of light can be compared with this? Do any bring in competition with the scriptures the light of human reason and philosophy? But who does not know, by long and sad experience, that even these can never be cultivated to any advantage, without the aid of the bible, and the practice of the christian religion? Expunge the scriptures, and the christian worship and ordinances from our colleges, and from all our literary institutions; and the whole foundation of literature and philosophy is undermined. Very little knowledge or instruction can be acquired, where the scriptures are discarded. They are, most evidently, the fountain of light and truth. Christ very justly claimed to be the light of the world: and wherever this light is extinguished, men grope in profound darkness and heathenism. But if the scriptures were a vile and wicked imposture; how could they be the light of the world?

9. The moral tendency and effects of the scriptures, prove clearly, that they are a divine revelation. Good morals proceed only from good principles. There is an inseparable connection between truth in principle, and virtue in practice: also between error in principle, and wickedness in practice. If, therefore, the moral tendency and effects of the scriptures are found to be good; if the laws and doctrines of the bible are found to be altogether salutary and beneficial to this sinful world; who can object to their being of a divine original? In this respect, deists in general, appear to be grossly inconsistent. For all, who possess a common share of candour, acknowledge the

beneficial tendency and effects of the scriptures; and many of them are disposed to encourage and support the ministry of the gospel; while they consider the whole bible as a system of *cunningly devised fables*. But can it, with any reason be supposed, that mere fables and fictions, uttered most arrogantly, in the name of the Lord, are the richest source of pure morality? Certainly not. The most excellent tendency and effects of the scriptures, result only from their being a system of divinely inspired and holy truth. This is as evident, as that a system of novels and romances is pernicious in its tendency and effects, because it is the result of error, delusion and licentiousness, in principle.

Do any declaim against certain doctrines of the bible, as being of dangerous tendency? Let them look well to the *effects* of these doctrines. By their effects, shall their tendency be decided. Only discard the doctrine of divine decrees and election, and of total depravity and regeneration, and of atonement and redemption by the blood of Christ; and the foundation of all experimental and practical religion is undermined; and nothing remains but a system of selfishness. The very doctrines, whose tendency is so much dreaded, are found, by their effects, to be *the doctrines which are according to godliness*. It is by the force of these solemn truths, applied by the spirit of God, to the consciences and the hearts of sinners, that they are converted, and saints edified. "Of his own will, begat he us, with the word of truth."

We have now attended to the principal arguments in proof of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures; and it is apprehended, that the evidence is abundant, and incontestable. We may therefore proceed in the discussion of the many remaining articles of the system of divine truth, relying with full confidence on these sacred oracles, both for illustration, and for legitimate proof. "*Thus saith the Lord,*" shall, hereafter, be tantamount to a demonstration.

On this interesting subject, we may remark, 1. The infinite condescension and mercy of God, in giving us such an ample fund of light and instruction of which we are utterly unworthy! With perfect justice, might he have left us, and all mankind, to grope in darkness, delusion and wickedness; totally destitute of a gleam of light or hope.

How infinitely different is our case from what it would have been, had we never heard of a God, nor of a Saviour, nor of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier! How should our souls magnify the Lord, and bless his holy name, for the gift of his word, which is *a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path!*

2. How sinful and deplorable is the state of those, who are determined never to believe in divine revelation; but to rely on their own wisdom and goodness for the hope of final happiness! As certainly as there is a Saviour, and they continue to reject him, they must perish for ever. How fervently should christians pray for unbelievers! "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"....

AMEN.



ESSAY III.

The perfections of God.

IN the last essay, proof has been offered, of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures. We may now proceed by the light of scripture and reason, to an illustration and proof of THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD. "As for God, his way is perfect." Equally perfect is his nature, and glorious are his attributes.

To exhibit a clear illustration and proof of the divine perfections, a distinction will be made between those which are called *natural*, and those which are called *moral* perfections. The natural perfections of God, consist in his *eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, invisibility and independence*. Of all the *moral* perfections of God, *holiness or goodness* is the sum and substance. But his goodness consists in *justice, mercy, spiritual wisdom, truth, and faithfulness*.

1. In the arrangement which has been made of the natural perfections of God, the first to be considered, is his eternity. And that he is, in the strictest sense, eternal, absolutely without beginning or end, or any limitation, is evident from this consideration, that if it ever was the case, that he had no existence, it was impossible for him without any antecedent cause, to commence an ex-

istence. Absolute nonentity could never have caused any existence whatever. If God be supreme, he is "The eternal God." In a manner, to us mysterious, God is self-existent, existing by a natural and eternal necessity. So that his non-existence is far more inconceivable than the non-existence of the whole universe. He exists independently of any causation, or any extraneous power and agency whatever.

However difficult it may be for us to comprehend the idea of God's eternity, yet the evidence is conclusive; and the scriptures declare, that "from everlasting to everlasting, he is God." If any imagine, that God could not have existed *happily*, from all eternity, on account of his being, till the birth of the rational creation, in a state of eternal solitude; this difficulty is obviated, by considering, that "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years; and a thousand years as one day." In his infinite mind, past, present and future are all alike. In his infinite mind, every object of delight and felicity, is eternally and invariably the same. His infinite happiness and glory are commensurate with his existence. For, "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

2. *Immutability* is next in the order of the divine attributes. "I am the Lord, I change not." Immutability in God results from his necessary and eternal existence. The very idea of necessary existence, implies the impossibility of change or variation. For the ground of this necessity is always the same. Jesus Christ is said to be the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Change implies a beginning of what is present, and a liability of its ending. Unless, therefore, God be immutable, there is no assurance of any thing; no assurance of his own eternal existence. To a ground of confidence, he must be *without variableness or shadow of turning*.

On the whole, it is evident, from scripture and reason, that God is absolutely unchangeable. His nature, his perfections, his purposes, his eternal counsels, and the great ends of all his operations, are invariably the same. "He is in one mind, and none can turn him, and what his soul desireth, even that he doth."

3. *Omnipotence* is, in the order of divine attributes, the next which claims our attention.

By this we are to understand, all possible power. Some

things are, in their nature, impossible ; and are, therefore, not the objects of power. To cause a thing to be, and at the same time, not to be, is absurd and impossible. Whatever is possible in the nature of things, is possible with God ; and in this sense only, “ With God all things are possible ;” and *nothing is too hard for the Almighty.*

To prove the omnipotence of God, we are to consider the magnitude and immensity of his works. The whole creation, visible and invisible, is the effect of his power. And “ the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.” “ All things were, strictly speaking, made of nothing, by the word of his power.” By his power, the very materials of the whole created system were brought into existence ; and by his omnipotence, were they arranged in their beautiful order and harmony : so that “ The heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” Not only were all things made by him ; but “ By him all things consist.” The preservation of the universe is as rich a display of infinite power, as its creation. It is God who supports and governs the universe. He it is “ who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” “ None can stay his hand, nor say unto him, what dost thou ?” “ Is any thing too hard for the Almighty ?” Omnipotence is a divine attribute, most abundantly declared and celebrated, in every part of the bible ; and, in its effects, it is realized by every candid observer.

We may observe further ; If God were not an omnipotent being, he must be infinitely unhappy. Instances innumerable must continually occur, in which, for the want of power, he would be liable to be defeated in his purposes, and rendered infinitely miserable. If God can possess the least degree of felicity, if he can rejoice in all, or *any* of his works, he is certainly **THE ALMIGHTY GOD.**

4. *Omniscience* is a divine attribute which, in the next place, claims our attention. By omniscience is meant, a perfect knowledge of all things. God being the creator, preserver and disposer of all things, must certainly possess a perfect knowledge of his own works. “ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world ; or as the words may be rendered, *from eternity.*”

The universal providence of God, clearly implies his omniscience. His agency, in directing all events, must

be without an object, unless he be omniscient. Is it not manifestly impossible for God to direct the falling of a sparrow to the ground, and to number all the hairs of our heads, unless he be omniscient? Truly, "the Lord is a God of knowledge; and by him actions are weighed." His knowledge is underived, unacquired, infinite, immutable and eternal.

5. *Omnipresence* is also a distinct, and glorious attribute of the Deity. In the nature of things, it is impossible, that the power or knowledge of God should be of an extent, beyond his presence. Nor can we conceive how he can be an infinite being, unless he be every where present. The doctrine of the universal presence of God, which is peculiarly solemn and interesting, is much celebrated in the holy scriptures. "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off, saith the Lord? Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" In the most solemn and animated strains, is the omnipresence of God celebrated by the Psalmist. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Thus it appears from reason and scripture, that God is omnipresent. In some faint degree, we may realize the presence of God, in every object we behold. All are the expressions of his infinite wisdom, power and goodness; and all express the agency of a present God. Well may we conceive, from what our eyes behold, that *he filleth all in all*. His presence fills immensity.

6. Another attribute of the Deity is, that he is an *invisible Spirit*; totally distinct from all material existence. He is the "King eternal, immortal, invisible." Although "he is in all places, beholding the evil and the good;" yet it is the testimony of the Saviour, that "No man hath seen God at any time." "God is a Spirit," immaterial and immortal. He has no more connection with material substance, than the departed souls of the dead. Accordingly it is considered in the scriptures, as one of the greatest of abominations for a man to frame in his own mind,

or to attempt to frame with his hands any material likeness of God. This, which is called idolatry, is most expressly forbidden in the sacred decalogue. On this point, Moses was very particular, and very solemn, in his charge to the people, in the book of Deuteronomy. "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female; the likeness of any beast that is on the earth; the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air. The likeness of any fish, &c. And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou shouldest be driven to worship them and serve them. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." Possibly the design of God's speaking so frequently out of the midst of the fire, was, to impress on the minds of his people, the important truth, that he is a pure, immaterial, invisible spirit; and, as such, is to be worshipped and adored. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

7. *Independence* may also be considered as an essential attribute of the Deity. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." He who is self-existent, is evidently independent. He is uncontrolled by fate, or blind chance, or any other cause. On him all creatures, actions and events depend. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." "His visitation preserveth our spirits." "And he hath done as he hath pleased, in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand, nor say unto him what dost thou?" By our own experience, we find ourselves *dependent*. By our observation of all other creatures and things, so far as they fall under our notice, we discover their absolute dependence. Surely, *that* invisible

and almighty power, on which all creatures and things depend, must be perfectly independent. All the natural perfections of God, which have been considered, conspire to prove his independence. Who that realizes his *eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and invisible spirituality*, can avoid the evidence of his independence? Should any still be disposed to call in question this glorious attribute of God; the point is established at once by a consideration of the universality of his providential government. If his governing providence extends to all things, great or small, most certainly, he is the source of all dependence; and must, himself, be independent.

8. Not to dilate any further, on the distinct perfections of God, which are denominated natural perfections; it may only be added, that in all these perfections, he is *infinite*. Infinity is predicable of all the perfections of God, whether natural or moral. He is, in all desirable respects, an infinite being: "His greatness is unsearchable." All his divine and glorious attributes are without bounds or limits. He is, in all respects, incomprehensible by finite minds. "None by searching can find out God." And all, that finite beings can report, after the most diligent search, is, "Lo, these are parts of his ways; and how little a portion is heard of him."

Having briefly investigated that part of the system of divine truth, which relates to the natural perfections of God; we proceed to a consideration of his *moral perfections*. And the sum and substance of these are expressed in few, and emphatical words; "THE LORD OUR GOD IS HOLY." Holiness consists in love, or true benevolence; and this is the moral character of God. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." In holy love, all goodness and righteousness consist. And God is love. But the exercises and expressions of this love are various, as its objects and occasions are various. Accordingly the *justice, mercy, wisdom, truth and faithfulness* of God, have been generally stated, as so many distinct moral perfections, constituting his infinitely holy character. These may be distinctly considered.

1. *Justice*, considered as characteristic of Jehovah, manifestly consists in the exercise and expression of perfect benevolence. For, by his justice, he is disposed to

vindicate and enforce his perfectly holy law. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" and in its precepts, prohibitions, promises and threatenings, it is equally perfect, and infinitely important. Divine justice is an attribute, no less important, and no less glorious, than divine mercy. It is an attribute which the merciful Saviour deemed more important than all finite existence. Concerning the divine law, which is the expression of God's inflexible justice, Christ declared, that, *till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle should in no wise pass from it, till all were fulfilled.* Thus it is clearly evident, that infinite justice comes into the idea of divine goodness and benevolence. Even the *vindictive* justice of God, which consists in the execution of divine wrath, on the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction; implies no malevolence in God, *no pleasure in the death of him that dieth*; but, on the other hand, as a benevolent Judge, full of tender mercy, he executes the sentence of death, with a view to the welfare of his moral kingdom. And the benevolence of God is as richly displayed, in shewing his wrath on the proper vessels of wrath, as in manifesting the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy. God requires the praise and thanksgiving of his people, no less for the destruction of their enemies, than for their own deliverance. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that divided the Red Sea into parts, for his mercy endureth for ever; and made Israel pass through the midst of it; for his mercy endureth for ever; but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that led his people through the wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which smote great kings; for his mercy endureth for ever; and slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." Thus we find that the vengeance of the Lord, which is called *his strange work*, is a rich display of his holiness. As an infinitely holy God, "Vengeance belongeth unto the Lord." In the execution of vindictive justice, "*The Lord our God is holy.*"

2. We have now, in a great measure, anticipated the idea, that mercy is a distinct moral attribute of the Deity. Mercy consists in compassion, not only to the miserable; but also to the wicked and ill deserving. All the favour and compassion of God towards this guilty world, is of the

nature of divine mercy. One great and capital expression of the mercy of God, is the gift of his Son to die for a lost and guilty world. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." This expression of infinite love was of the nature of mercy. It is evident, therefore, that the mercy of God is no infringement on his justice. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Accordingly, when God proclaimed his name to Moses, he proclaimed his mercy, in connection with his justice. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will, by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." Thus it appears, that the Lord our God is infinitely merciful; and this is a branch of his holiness.

3. *Infinite wisdom*, in the highest sense of the word, is also a moral perfection of God. This wisdom consists in discerning the best possible ends, and devising the best possible means for their accomplishment. This is the fountain of that "wisdom in men which is from above, and is first pure, *i. e.* holy; then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." This wisdom, as it exists in the heart of the saints, is *the principal thing*. And if the Most High inspires the heart of his people with such a holy knowledge, and spiritual discernment; it implies, that he has, in himself, an infinite fulness of the same heavenly wisdom. With reference to the great work of redemption, wisdom is an appropriate name of Christ; and he is called the power of God, and the *wisdom* of God. Wisdom, in the sense of scripture, generally, and in the sense which has now been given, is of the nature of holiness; and is a glorious attribute of God.

4. *The truth and faithfulness of God* are the consummation of his character. Truth consists in representing things as they are, without the least disguise, or colouring: and faithfulness consists in a perfect and complete execution, or performance of whatever is promised or threatened; or in any way, becomes obligatory. The truth

and faithfulness of God are most abundantly asserted in the scriptures. *God that cannot lie*, is the God whose character is set before us in the sacred oracles.

We have also conclusive evidence of the truth and faithfulness of God, from the fulfilment of his word, in all instances, so far as we have had opportunity to be his witnesses. God's testimony respecting all things, appears to be true. He appears to be a God of truth, and without iniquity; "*Just and right is he.*"

Having attended to the particulars in which the moral perfections of God consist, and found that they are all comprised in holiness, or moral goodness; the way is prepared to attend, more fully, to the evidence of his goodness.

Admitting the authenticity of the scriptures, which has been fully established; we have abundant evidence from them, not only in a way of declaration, but also in a way of reasoning and just conclusion, that *the Lord is good*; and that *the Lord our God is holy*. There is indeed no want of proof, from the light of nature, that the moral character of God is good. And this is a subject of immense importance. For if, in fact, the evidence of God's goodness did not exist, except in the book of divine revelation; how could the ignorant and untutored savages of the wilderness be wholly without excuse, in not knowing and worshipping the true God? With great candour and attention, therefore, it is incumbent on us to look into the evidence from the light of nature, as well as from the light of scripture, that the Lord our God is holy, just and good. On this ground, the whole world appears to be guilty before God. And we are happy to find, that, in the scriptures themselves, the evidence of the moral perfections of God is exhibited from the light of nature. Their reasonings we may adopt, with all safety; and their conclusions will be full of validity. The arguments from scripture are drawn from the mighty works of God, and particularly from the work of creation. "*The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; neither were they thankful. But became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart*

was darkened." In the connection of this noted passage, it is said concerning those, against whom the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, that "That which may be known of God is manifest to them, for God hath shewed unto them." He manifested his true character, as we have found, by his mighty works. He manifested his eternal power and Godhead, in such a manner and degree, by the great and glorious work of creation, as to render the heathen without excuse, in all their idolatries. *That Godhead* which was manifested by the work of creation, was something more than *eternal power*; which is only a *natural* perfection. It implied, also, *moral* perfection, which is necessary to render God the object of love and adoration. The same argument from the light of nature, is stated in the 19th Psalm. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard;" *i. e.* the voice of the heavens, and the firmament, proclaiming the glory of God. But what glory could possibly redound to God, from his mighty works, if he were destitute of moral perfection, and were an unholy and malevolent being? An omnipotent being, void of goodness, and devoted to evil, would justly merit the abhorrence and detestation of all rational creatures. And would not such a being feel conscious of his own infinite baseness and malignity? which would render him supremely and eternally miserable! If God has the least regard to his own honour and glory, and to his own happiness, he must certainly be an infinitely holy being, possessed of perfect moral goodness and benevolence.

We further observe, that in the scriptures, the moral perfection of God is inferred from his infinite supremacy and independence. The patriarch Abraham relied on this argument, when he interceded for the Sodomites; "Shall not *the judge of all the earth* do right?" Is it possible, that an infinite being, a being absolutely supreme and independent; a being far above all possible interest, motive, or inducement to do evil, should pervert judgment, and do wickedly? To act without a motive would seem to be impossible; but to act against the strongest motives, is clearly and decidedly impossible.

Another evidence of the goodness and even the mercy of God arises from the good which he actually does ; and from the numberless favours, which he confers on the guilty race of men. All who can distinguish between right and wrong, must be sensible of great sinfulness and ill desert. All, therefore, ought to realize the great goodness and mercy of God, manifested in their daily preservation, and daily comforts. Thus reasons the Apostle. Speaking of the living God, who made heaven and earth ; and who, in times past, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways ; he adds, “ Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that *he did good*, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Thus it appears that the common blessings of divine providence afford conclusive evidence, that the Lord is good, and that he is merciful. “ It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not.”

Further ; the system of divine law and government, which is revealed in the bible, affords unquestionable evidence of the holiness and goodness of God. “ The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good.” Especially does this appear, since the law is enforced by an adequate penalty. The character of legislators is learnt by their code of laws ; and by the steadfastness, with which they enforce their laws. If we attend also, to the history of divine providence, we discover increasing evidence of the infinite goodness of God. He always acts the part of a friend to holiness, and an enemy to wickedness. This he did, in the destruction of the ungodly world by the flood, when Noah was saved in the ark. This he did when Sodom was destroyed, and just Lot was delivered. This he did, when the Egyptians and Canaanites were, in their turns, destroyed, and his chosen people were delivered, and inherited the promises. Also, in the destruction of all the proud and idolatrous empires of the earth, which have, from time to time, oppressed the people of God, he has displayed his love of righteousness, and hatred of wickedness. Beyond all doubt therefore, he is holy, just and good. He claims the confidence, the submission, the fervent love, and most cheerful obedience, of all his intelligent creatures.

ESSAY IV.

The Unity and Trinity of the Godhead.

IN pursuance of the system of divine truth, we have found evidence of the being of a God ; and that the scriptures of the old and new testaments were given by divine inspiration. We have, in the last place, attended to an illustration and proof of the natural and moral perfections of God.

Depending chiefly on the holy scriptures, for light and evidence, on the high and mysterious subjects which relate to the Godhead, we may, in the next place, proceed to a consideration of the *Unity and Trinity of God*.

Previously to attending to the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, it is thought proper to consider the evidence of the unity of God. For the principal objection to the doctrine of the Trinity is, that it destroys his unity. The Unity of God is abundantly asserted in the holy scriptures, and is agreeable to the dictates of reason. The scriptures declare, that "The Lord our God is one Lord." "I am the Lord, and there is none else." He is called "The Holy One of Israel." "The only Lord God." "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me."

The unity of God has also been said to be agreeable to the dictates of reason. It is evident from the divine perfections. In all his attributes and perfections, God is infinite and supreme. In his power, omniscience, omnipresence, God is supreme ; he is "*all in all*." It is absurd to suppose, that there is a plurality of Deities, each of whom is supreme ; each of whom is all in all. It is said that in his wisdom and knowledge, God is infinite, and unsearchable. "None by searching can find out God." But if there are more Gods than one, then, by searching, they can find out one another. To conceive of more than one being, who is self-existent, independent, uncontrollable, immutable, eternal and infinite, is utterly impossible. If we attempt to conceive of two such beings as God is represented to be ; they must, in all respects, be perfectly alike. In all their attributes and works, they must be exactly the same. This would render them one and indivisible. It is therefore, in the nature of things, impos-

sible ; or to say the least, inconceivable, that more than one infinite being should exist. The created universe is infinitely too small to admit of a plurality of Gods. Nor is a plurality conceivable.

Having, in opposition to all idolatry, established the unity of the Godhead ; the way is now prepared, with all humility and reverence, to attend to a discussion of the doctrine of the *Trinity*. This doctrine is taught and supported, only by divine revelation ; and, of course, no attempt will be made to explain or prove it, by arguments drawn from any other source. As a clue to this high and mysterious doctrine, we find, in the beginning of the bible, and elsewhere, that the name of the Deity is used in the plural, as well as in the singular number. In the Hebrew language, which was the original language of the old testament, the name of God is generally plural. “ In the beginning, *Gods* created the heaven and the earth.” Pronouns relating to God are also used in the plural number. “ Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” It is added, in support of the unity, as well as the plurality of the Godhead ; “ So *God* created man in *his* own image ; in the image of *God* created *he* him.” After the apostasy of man, in order to keep up the idea of plurality, as well as unity, God said, “ Behold the man is become like one of *us* to know good and evil.”

To frustrate the building of Babel, the Lord said, “ Let *us* go down, and there confound their language.” In many other places, in the old testament, the name of God, and the pronouns relating to it, are expressed in the plural number, indefinitely. But waving these, let us proceed to the direct evidence of the particular doctrine of the *Trinity*. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah, the Lord speaking of sending the Saviour, says, “ Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us* ?” Here the sender, after expressing himself in the singular number, *I* ; changed to the plural number, *us*. He that consented to go, was a third person. This makes a trinity of persons in the Godhead. Accordingly, when the seraphim, as in the same chapter, celebrate, in heavenly strains, the glory of God, it is the glory of the triune God. “ Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” Another passage in the forty-eighth chapter, is clearly indicative of the sacred *Trinity*. In this, the Redeemer himself, an-

icipating his coming in the flesh, says, "And now the Lord God, and his spirit hath sent me." Here the Trinity is expressed most distinctly. Thus we find, even in the old testament, many indications and expressions of this mysterious doctrine.

In the new testament, this doctrine is doubtless confuted or confirmed. That it is confirmed, and not confuted, will appear from the plainest testimony. The Apostle John, who had occasion, on account of the heresies which sprang up in his old age, to write more particularly on the Unity and Trinity of the Godhead, than his fellow apostles, has stated the subject very clearly. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." This testimony is so clear and explicit, that it admits of no evasion. The only shift that can be made, is, to pronounce it uncanonical. Admit this testimony of the Apostle John, and the point is settled. But, even supposing this passage to be doubtful, or even uncanonical; yet we have evidence remaining abundantly sufficient to establish the doctrine of the Trinity. The Apostle, in his epistle to the Colossians, speaks of the acknowledgment of "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." God and the Father will be admitted as terms denoting divinity: and Christ has the same rank and dignity. With great propriety, this is the acknowledgment of a *mystery*. In view of the same subject, it is said, "Great is the *mystery* of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit," &c. Mystery is admitted in this, as well as in other subjects, the truth of which is unquestionable. Mystery implies no absurdity, no contradiction; and of course, it is no objection to this, nor to any other doctrine of divine revelation. Do any object to the doctrine of creation or providence, on account of mystery? But if the works of God are mysterious, may we not expect to find the mode of his existence equally mysterious?

To proceed with the argument. When we attend to the history of the Saviour; as recorded by the evangelists, we find him always speaking of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, as of God; and he hesitates not to consider himself as one and the same God. "I and the Father are one." He requires that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He speaks also of the

Holy Spirit, who should come in his name, as one who should exercise infinite power and goodness : who should *guide his people into all the truth* ; and “reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” He never speaks of the Holy Ghost as a being inferior to God. And when he says of himself, “My Father is greater than I,” he evidently has respect to his human nature, in distinction from the divine. Otherwise he must be guilty of a palpable contradiction, in saying “I and the Father are one ;” and in demanding equal honour with the Father.

Again ; The doctrine of the Trinity clearly results from the distinct and separate evidence of the divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. These two persons being proved to be divine, the great doctrine of the Trinity follows, and is established. That Christ is God, is evident, not only from his own declarations, but from the testimony of others divinely inspired. “Thy Maker is thine husband,” says the evangelical prophet, “the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.” The plain meaning is that he is *the Deity*. He is said to be the root and the offspring of David.” In prophecy, he is called IMMANUEL, *God with us*. Beyond a doubt, he was revealed to Abraham and the patriarchs, to Moses and the prophets, as well as to the antediluvians, as the Lord their God. He was the Angel of the church in the wilderness ; and when the people provoked and tempted their God in the wilderness, the Apostle calls it tempting Christ. “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” Concerning God’s providential care of his people in the wilderness, it is said, “the angel of his presence (Christ) saved them, and in his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Thus evident is the divinity of Christ from the old testament. From the new testament we may calculate for equal, if not for greater evidence. Here we read, that he is the “brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power.” “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Such are the direct testimonies of

Christ's divinity ; and these testimonies are confirmed by his mighty works. To him is ascribed the creation of the world. "All things were made by him." "By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created by him, and for him." He is also the God of providence ; for "by him all things consist." The miracles of Christ, are also a strong attestation of his divinity. These works of infinite power and mercy were wrought in his own name, and by his own authority ; and for the express purposes of supporting, not only his doctrines, but his claims to real and proper divinity. All divine attributes, as well as works are ascribed to him, in the scriptures ; and these attributes have been abundantly displayed. Nothing has failed, of all that is considered as evidence of his divinity.

Respecting the distinct personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit, we may observe, that to him belonged, and still belong, the great works of regeneration and sanctification. Those who are the subjects of regenerating grace, are said to be born of the Spirit : they are also expressly said to be born of God. The Spirit, therefore, is God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." "But holy men of old, spake as they were moved, by the Holy Ghost." The inspiration of the Holy Ghost, therefore, is the inspiration of God. Baptism is in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as in that of the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost is therefore, equally with the others, a divine person. The three constitute one and the same God. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart, to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" said Peter to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the true God. To him also, are the attributes and works of God ascribed. In the resurrection of Christ, he was said to be quickened by the Spirit. When the miracles of Christ were blasphemously imputed to the power of Beelzebub ; it was the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and was the unpardonable sin. By the power of the Holy Ghost, therefore, miracles were wrought. Evidence is not wanting, to prove the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Having proved distinctly and separately, that Christ and the Holy Spirit are God, equally

with the Father, there ought not to remain the least doubt, respecting the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead.

Another observation, tending to confirm the doctrine of the Trinity, and at the same time to impress on our minds its infinite importance, is this, that if the doctrine be denied, and if it prove untrue, the whole gospel scheme is subverted. For if this article of faith be groundless, there remains no foundation for the covenant of redemption, nor for the work of redemption; no foundation for an atonement, or mediation between a righteous God, and sinful men; no foundation for any sanctifying operation upon the hearts of sinners; no foundation for grace or peace, pardon or christian hope. Mysterious or offensive as the doctrine of the Trinity may appear to be, it is evidently the basis of the christian scheme. And whoever denies it, must deny, not only the doctrines of grace, through the atoning blood of Christ; but also the necessity of God's executing the penalty of his law, either in time or in eternity. We may, on the whole, as well deny the being of a God, as deny his Trinity in unity. For there is no other God revealed to us in the holy scriptures; and the scriptures are the only source of light on this great subject. The Apostle John considers it as, not only anti-christian, but atheistical, to deny this doctrine. "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."

Finally, it is absurd for people to call themselves christians, while they deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Do any think it impossible that there should be three distinct persons in one divine being or essence? let them consider, that it belongs not to them to determine what is possible, and what is impossible with God; and especially in the mode of his existence. Were it not a matter of fact, in the mode of man's existence in this world, that a mortal body is connected with an immortal soul; the thing would have been thought impossible. But the Trinity in unity of the Godhead as really exists, as the union of soul and body. Since the truth of the scriptures is demonstrated, we are bound to credit their testimony concerning the unity and Trinity of God, as fully as we credit our own observation and experience, with regard to the mysterious union of soul and body in man.

True it is, that the doctrine of the Trinity is an article of faith ; and is neither an article of intuitive knowledge, nor of demonstration, by the power of human reasoning. But do any despise the idea of implicit faith in the known testimony of God ? If so, then let them calculate to live and die in darkness. The boundaries of human knowledge are very narrow. Little can be known of God, but by divine instruction ; and still less can be *comprehended*, even by the best instruction. If we be truly humble and candid, and consider well the scantiness of all human attainments ; we shall meet with no insuperable difficulty in embracing, and relying upon the all important doctrine of the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead.

On this branch of the system of divine truth, a few remarks and inferences are suggested.

1. Since the doctrine before us is a profound mystery, discoverable only by divine revelation, it is doubtless vain, and even criminal, for us to attempt any further explanation of it, than is clearly given us in the holy scriptures. In doing this, we darken counsel, by words without knowledge. Whatever is necessary, or even useful to be known on this, and all divine subjects, is doubtless clearly revealed ; and to attempt any further investigation is indicative of a vain curiosity, and a proud heart.

2. Since, in this one instance, we are required to embrace and confide in a profound mystery ; let it be no objection to any of the remaining doctrines of the system of truth, that they are mysterious. Pitiful indeed would be a system of divinity, comprehensible by worms of the dust ! Let no one indulge the absurd idea, that mystery and absurdity are synonymous terms. Great is the mystery of gravitation, by which ponderous bodies fall to the earth, rather than move in any other direction. But is gravitation an absurdity ? Great is the mystery of the rise of vapor, soon to fall again in showers of rain, or quantities of snow. But the facts exist, and the wisdom of the philosopher is baffled. Yet no one complains of absurdity. How happens it, that mankind can patiently admit of mysteries in every thing but *Theology* ? But if we speak of *the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ* ; and of divine agency, divine government and grace ; all is pronounced absurdity. In this there is utterly a fault, and a want of candour.

3. Since so many deny the doctrine of the Trinity, it is a solemn and awful consideration, that to deny it, is a great and fatal error, *a damnable heresy!* In the denial of this doctrine, men “deny the Lord that bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” From scripture it is evident, that those who understandingly reject the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, and of course, the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and atonement by his blood, are on fatal ground. The evidence is clear, that they subvert the whole gospel scheme, and seek to be justified by their good works, and not by the grace of God.

4. From the view which has been taken of the doctrine of the Trinity in unity of the Godhead, it appears to be very far from being a subject of mere speculation, or a matter of indifference. It is a cardinal, and fundamental doctrine of the gospel. Salvation on bible ground is never to be expected, but by the atonement and merit of Jesus Christ. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” No one, who properly regards the sacred oracles, can think it uncharitable or illiberal, to consider the antitrinitarian doctrine as an antichristian doctrine. “He is *antichrist,*” says the beloved John, “who denieth the Father and the Son.” Can there be any hope of the salvation of antichrists? By no means. And, by nature, all are antichrists. All, therefore, before they can see the kingdom of God, must be converted to Christ. They must be converted to the doctrine of the Trinity, before they can cease to be antichrists. They must acknowledge the Son of God, as one with the Father. “And we know, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”....AMEN.



ESSAY V.

The work of Creation.

HAVING attended to the evidence of the *being* of God, of his inspiration of the scriptures, of his natural and moral

perfections, and of his Unity and Trinity; we may proceed, in the next place, to a consideration of his *works*. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those who have pleasure in them." In this Essay, we may attend to the great and glorious work of *creation*. By the work of creation is meant, not merely the formation of the world out of pre-existing materials; but the origination and production of the materials themselves. So that, in the strictest sense, "All things were made of nothing, by the word of divine power." For this, we have the testimony of the Apostle Paul. "Through faith we understand, that the worlds were framed, by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." When nothing but the Deity was in existence, "He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast. By the word of the Lord, were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The whole system of creation, material, animate, and intellectual, commenced existence, at his word. He produced and gave existence to the invisible, as well as the visible heavens. Angels, and their blessed habitations, were parts of the stupendous work of creation. All finite existence was the effect of creative power.

That every thing, or even *any thing* could be brought into existence, where nothing previously existed, is said by many to be impossible. According to the statement of the Apostle, we acknowledge the doctrine of creation to be *an article of faith*, and not of finite comprehension. But is there any absurdity in supposing, that the world had a beginning? and will have an end? John, in the Revelation, says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face, the earth and the heavens fled away: and there was found no place for them." Of course, they ceased to have a place; which implies annihilation. It is also said prophetically, concerning the end of the world, that "The day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." By this is meant annihilation. But creation and annihilation stand on equal ground, as to their possibility. From the instruction contained in the scriptures respecting the creation and dissolution of the mate-

rial world, it is evident, that, literally speaking, there was a beginning, and there will be an end of all material existence. This is the scriptural doctrine of creation.

Should any still deny this doctrine; and contend for the eternal existence of what we call the created system; we may in confirmation of bible testimony, attend to the following reasoning on the subject; to wit: If the material world, or the created system, so called, be eternal, it is uncaused. For every thing which has a cause, has also a beginning. The cause must be antecedent to the effect. And if it be uncaused, it must also be self-existent. It must exist by a necessity of nature. Its existence must be, in the nature of things, so absolutely necessary, that it would be impossible to conceive of its annihilation, or non-existence. Of course, it must be immutable: because its necessity must be invariably the same. No power can operate to alter or change what is self-existent, or existent by a necessity of nature. Such existence is absolutely independent and uncontrollable; of course, immutable. But, in fact, we do not find the world to be self-existent, independent and immutable. We find it dependent, and very mutable; subject to perpetual changes and variations: possessing all the properties of an effect; but not one of the properties of a first cause. All things in the visible world exhibit the most striking appearance of vast and magnificent effects, which naturally lead the mind to contemplate, by way of inference, an infinite and invisible cause.

On the whole, one of two things, respecting the doctrine of creation, must be true; either that the visible world had a beginning, and was brought into existence by the almighty power of God, and for a display of his infinite glory, as the scriptures plainly teach us; or else the world itself is God, and as such, is to be worshipped and adored, by all intelligent beings. There is no other alternative; and the unbeliever of the mysterious, but glorious work of creation, in order to be consistent, must fall down and worship the sun, moon and stars, and all the host of heaven; or the earth, air and seas, with the fulness thereof. He must embrace and practice all the follies and idolatries of the heathen world. Yea, he must go further and outstrip the heathen, in point of idolatry. For very few of the heathen, who have any idea of a

God, consider the visible system as any thing more than the representation and similitude of the one eternal and invisible God. Those, therefore, who ascribe divine attributes to the creation itself, greatly exceed the heathen, in the degree and grossness of their idolatry. They literally *worship and serve the creature, more than the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* Infinitely important, therefore, is the real and scriptural doctrine of creation. Error on this subject, evidently involves mankind in the grossest idolatry, and leads to atheism.

Respecting the creation of rational beings, formed for immortality, such as angels and men; there is no difference from the creation of the material world, as to their commencing an existence, instantaneously and originally, by the almighty power of God. The intellectual and moral faculties of men, and of angels, are the effects of creative power. Man was *made* a moral agent, as well as a rational and immortal being. All that he is, and all that he possesses, is from God. God stamped on man and angels his natural and moral image, by his creative power. "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul." This was the finishing stroke, and the most wonderful and glorious act of creation.

On the subject of creation, the inquiry is sometimes made, *when* this great and marvellous work was performed. John the Evangelist says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him;" conveying the idea, that all things were made, *in the beginning.* The same is the idea, in the Mosaic history. "In the beginning, God created the heaven, and the earth." By the beginning, is evidently meant the commencement of time. For the very idea of time, consisting in the succession of days and years, had its origin, when finite and intelligent beings commenced their existence. "One day with the Lord, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day." In the divine mind there is no succession of ideas, no fore nor after. Strictly speaking, there was no time before, nor time *when* the work of creation was performed. This great work was not only in the beginning, but it constituted the beginning of what we call *time.* In the divine mind, a whole eternity is one invariable, unsuccessive now.

We hence see the fallacy and impertinence of the question, "why was not the great and glorious work of creation performed millions of ages sooner than it was? Why has God deferred, during eternal ages, these rich displays of his divine perfections?" In this case, we are to consider, that *sooner and later*, are impertinent terms. There was nothing on which these comparative terms could be predicated. For what we call eternal duration is, in the infinite mind of God, without duration or succession. The creation, and the final judgment of the world, are equally, and eternally present with the Lord.

Another thing noticeable in the work of creation, is its extent. Respecting this we may say, It extends to all existence, except that which is divine. Angels and seraphim, and their glorious habitations called the heavens, constitute parts of the vast work of creation. Holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, together with the exalted Redeemer, in his resurrection state, have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This is a work of creation. Although in the history of creation, the word, heavens, might have had particular reference to the visible heavens, such as the sun, moon and stars: yet this is by no means the exclusive meaning. When the Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," his meaning is the visible heavens. But not to exclude the more rich display of his glory, by the creation of the invisible heavens. When Christ speaks of many mansions in his Father's house, prepared for the everlasting residence of his faithful followers, he doubtless meant *created mansions*. The invisible heavens, therefore, as well as the visible, together with the earth and seas, and all creatures and things that are therein, belong to the work of creation. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." Thus extensive is the work of creation.

Another thing expressive of the wisdom of God in the work of creation, is the process and order of this great work. From the history it appears, that it was not, in all respects, an instantaneous, but in one respect, a gradual work. It is probable, however, if not evident, from the Mosaic history, that the substance of the whole material

system was instantaneously called into existence, by the word of divine power; and was, at first, produced in a state of confused chaos. Accordingly it is said, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." As the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, were all created *in the beginning*; it seems to be implied, that all, at first, were produced instantaneously; and probably, all in a chaotic state. These heavenly bodies, not being prepared, at first to emit their light, may account for the darkness which was upon the face of the deep. Henceforth, the great work was successive and gradual. Now commenced the idea of time and succession; particularly in the view of angels. For, from the history of the six days' works of creation, it appears probable, that the angels had been previously brought into existence, to be spectators of the series of wonders, which were displayed, in the process of this most marvellous work. From a passage in the book of Job, it is made evident, that the angels were joyful spectators of the work of creation. Speaking of this glorious work, it is said, that, in a view of it, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Angels were then the only sons of God. They only were capable of being spectators and witnesses of God's wonderful works. And is it not rational to suppose, that, on this great occasion, God would glorify himself, by having an innumerable host of the most exalted of all finite beings to be spectators and admirers of the work of creation? By this work, performed in the most natural and consistent order, the vast and gloomy chaos was reduced to perfect symmetry, beauty and utility. Thus the heavens and the earth being finished, and all the hosts of them, even all the animals and vegetables that were made; God proceeded to create man, the most noble and finishing work, in this lower world. Man alone, among all the vast variety of creatures which were made, to inhabit the earth, air and seas, was possessed of rational faculties, and was formed for immortality. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Man became a moral agent, and a probationer for a glorious immortality. As to the particular order of the process of God's reducing the earth to its primitive beauty and

perfection; and of his creating and forming, from the chaotic mass, all kinds of animals and vegetables, whose seed is in themselves; we find it so distinctly recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, that all further comment on this head is needless. The second chapter contains a rehearsal of some of the great works recorded in the first; and is not, as some suppose, a continuation of the history. This chapter begins by a reference to the first; "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." Thus man was made of the dust of the earth, male and female were they created; and the female was made of one of man's ribs, that she might be bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. This was the last and most wonderful display of creative power. The order of creation appears to be natural and beautiful; one great and magnificent work succeeding another, till the whole was completed, and pronounced by the Creator to be *very good*.

Another thing which displays the wisdom and goodness, as well as the infinite power of God, in the work of creation, is, that all creatures and things were produced in a state of maturity, and were formed to propagate their own species. Herbs, plants, and trees, and the crops of precious grain; every thing requisite to the support of life; and every species of animals, from the greatest to the least, which had need of daily support and nourishment, were created in a state of maturity. All this is plainly taught us, in the rehearsal of the work of creation, Gen. ii. 4, 5. "These are the generations of the heavens, and of the earth, when they were created; in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before it grew*." The first crop of all vegetables was not produced by growth, but by creation. And it is added; "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was not," *or had not been, as yet*, "a man to till the ground." Man and beast were created in full maturity, and so was every thing requisite to their ample support. Had not this been the case, the whole of the animal creation must have perished in the infancy of their existence. What a mixture of divine power, wisdom and goodness was displayed, in the creation of the whole vegetable and animal world in a state of maturity! Well might the great Creator pronounce the whole *very good*!

Another thing respecting the great work of creation, and which is calculated to relieve the minds of those who complain of the *form* of the earth, as being a hideous form, rendering this world an almost inhospitable region, is this; that in its original form, it was doubtless, very different from what it is at present, or from what it has been, since the general deluge. Originally, it was made in the most pleasant and convenient form imaginable. Though we read of *high hills and mountains*, above which the waters of the flood prevailed; yet high hills and mountains are relative terms, not deciding the magnitude of either, except in a comparative sense. “*Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered.*” Mountains of this magnitude, it is readily seen, would be necessary to the most pleasant and productive form of the earth. In this respect, the form of the earth was very good. By the flood, which was an execution of divine wrath upon the world, which was *filled with violence*, the earth was subjected to an awful revolution. *The fountains of the great deep*, meaning the subterraneous waters, *were broken up*. The earth was broken to pieces in a thousand hideous shapes and forms; the effects of which are visible to this day. Then was realized the threatening to fallen man; “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake.*” The earth which, till this time, supported man and beast on vegetable food, could do it no longer. It was from this time, with difficulty, that man could support himself on both vegetable and animal food. On the whole, it is evident, that the earth, in its original, antediluvian state, was most happily formed for the residence and support of man and beast. It was, probably, as fertile as can be conceived. The support of life, in the original state of the earth, instead of a toil, would have been a rich source of pleasure. Had it not been for the fall of man, and the curse denounced upon him and his posterity, and even upon the ground itself, on account of his apostasy, the whole world would have been a paradise. But, alas! from this time, thorns and briars sprang up in the most fertile fields; and with great difficulty and labour, *with the sweat of his face*, did man procure a scanty living. Thus it appears to be from no defect of creation, that we live in a rough and hideous world.

REMARKS.

1. From the view which we have taken of the work of creation, we discover, more and more, the evidence of the goodness of God. We may indeed make this conclusion, from a general argument on the subject. If we consider, that goodness consists in doing good; and that no good could be done by the Deity, but by first creating proper objects of good and happiness; we shall readily conclude, that infinite goodness is expressed, in the work of creation. Especially when we consider, that, in this glorious work, God has adapted every thing to the good and happiness of his intelligent creatures. Had they all improved the goodness of God as they ought, this world would have been a happy state of existence. Man was made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with honour and glory; and had given to him the dominion over all the creatures in this lower world. Of all the good and happiness, which were adapted to this world, even in its original state, there was no deficiency. And that which was of infinitely more consequence, was, that he had a fair and hopeful prospect of increasing glory and felicity in heaven for ever. How great was the goodness of God, manifested in the work of creation! "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

2. From what has been said on the doctrine of creation, we infer, that this great and magnificent work was designed to answer some adequate ends and purposes. The earth was made to be inhabited. The sun, moon and stars were not made in vain. Whether any of them were made to be inhabited, is not for us to decide. On this subject the scriptures are not conclusive. They seem to intimate, however, that these splendid luminaries were made for the accommodation of mankind. "The sun to rule the day, and the moon and stars to rule the night." Had these vast bodies been inhabited by rational beings, subjects of creation and providential government, in common with angels and men; why should the scriptures be so silent respecting them? But whether the planets are inhabited or not, we may be assured, that the whole work of creation is designed to answer the most important purposes. "God hath made all things for himself;" and for

the richest display of his own glory. In himself, he is infinitely glorious ; and it implies in him no contracted and criminal selfishness, to have a supreme regard to his own glory in the creation of the world.

But the peculiar method which God takes to display his glory, by the work of creation, is through the medium of his redeemed church. It is said, that " God created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, *by the church*, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The great work of redemption, it seems, was uppermost in the mind of God, as a medium for the display of his glory, by the work of creation. Redemption was not, as some suppose, a remedy for unexpected evils. No, it was a part of the eternal plan and design of creation. In plain terms, it was "*according to the eternal purpose of God.*" It was a grand end, a leading object of the work of creation, to lay a foundation for the more glorious works of redemption and grace. So that man, who was made lower than the angels in creation ; and who should degrade himself, by his apostasy to the rank of devils ; might be put into a situation, through faith in Jesus Christ, to rise superior to the elect angels, in eternal glory. And in this sinful and imperfect state, the holy angels are said to be ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who are heirs of salvation. The plan of creation, as preparatory in the eternal counsel of God, to the work of redemption, is wonderful ! These are the things which *the angels desire to look into* : and these are the things, which are, to us, most highly interesting. As we are in a situation to rise in glory above the holy angels ; so we are liable, by our impenitence and unbelief, to sink in wretchedness below the fallen angels. God will glorify himself, if it be in our final condemnation. The great concern of all should be, to concur in the great object of creation, and devote themselves supremely to the honour and glory of God.

ESSAY VI.

God's works of Providence.

HAVING, in the preceding Essay, attempted a discussion of the great subject of creation; it is proposed in this, to consider *the works of Divine Providence.*

To every candid and reflecting mind, it is obvious, that the work of creation, great as it was, must have been a useless exertion of infinite power and wisdom, had there not been established, in the divine purpose, a wise and holy providential government. The great work of creation, which was last considered, was introductory and preparatory to the operations of divine providence. According to the correct definition in the shorter catechism, "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." All the creatures of God were made for the most important purposes—purposes which could never be accomplished, were there no providential government.

In God's works of providence, more is implied, than a mere notice, inspection and oversight of the created system. He exerts the same infinite power and wisdom, in preserving all things and directing them to their proper ends, which he exerted, when he called the universe into existence. A man is said to be provident, when he looks well to his affairs, and directs all his matters with wisdom and discretion. In these respects, God is an infinitely provident being. For he not only inspects, constantly, all creatures and things in the universe; but he also gives to all their direction, overruling them for his own glory, and for the greatest possible general good. In God's works of providence, infinite power and agency are employed. So that the operations of divine providence, in preserving, directing and controlling all things, are equal, in point of power and wisdom, to a continued creation. Should he withhold for a moment, his omnipotent aid and support, the whole created system would become extinct. As respects the animal creation, "In him they live, and move, and have their being." As respects the life and immortality of mankind, it is said, "His visitation preserv-

eth our spirits." "If he withhold his spirit," that is, the breath which he breathed into man, when he became a living soul, "we die, and return to dust." Should man die and revive at every breath, the providence of God would be no more exerted, than it is in the usual mode of preserving human life. In the most literal sense, all creatures and things are dependent, alone, on the providence of God for support in existence; and for direction to their proper ends and purposes. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord." To show clearly, that God has the disposal of lots, and of every thing else, we may observe, that He perfectly knows all things. When the lot is about to be cast, relying on chance to decide the event; God foresees the event. How could this be possible, if it depended on chance? In this case, there is but one alternative. We must acknowledge the constant disposing hand of providence, in all events; or deny the being of an omniscient God. "I am God," says Jehovah, "and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord."

We observe further; To preserve and govern the whole universe, in all its variety, and in all its connections and dependencies; the providence of God must be, not only universal, but most minute and particular. Thus it is strikingly represented in the holy scriptures. They teach us, that it is God who clothes the grass, and adorns the lilies of the field. He takes care for oxen, and hears the young ravens, when they cry. "Yea, a sparrow falls not to the ground without him, and the hairs of our heads are all numbered." "He opens his hand, and satisfies the wants of every living creature." Astonishing must be the extent and particularity of that providence, by which the myriads of living creatures in the earth, air and sea, receive their daily protection and support.

Thus God's providence implies, not only his universal knowledge, and observation; but also his special care, support, protection and disposal of all things. And a very particular object is, to direct all creatures and things to the most important ends and purposes.

Another branch of the great subject of divine providence is, that it extends to all the *actions*, as well as to the outward state and circumstances of mankind. All will grant, that when the trees are moved by the wind, God's providence is exerted. When buildings and forests are destroyed by a tornado, and many lives are lost, it is an awful dispensation of divine providence. When the fields are laden with the richest produce of a prosperous season, men experience the smiles of a kind and merciful providence. But, strange as it may seem, there is a strong reluctance in mankind to acknowledge the agency of God's providence, in directing and controlling the hearts and actions of sinful men. Not but that mankind in general, who enjoy, and profess to believe in divine revelation, acknowledge divine agency in the conviction and conversion of sinners. They see no objection to God's renewing the hearts of sinners, by his all-conquering grace. They acknowledge the *exceeding greatness* of God's power manifested in those who "believe, according to the working of his mighty power." They do not imagine, that the agency of God, in the conviction and conversion of sinners, interferes at all with their own free agency, in the love and service of Christ. They profess to admit the plain testimony of scripture, that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In this important matter, divine providence, divine agency, and divine grace, are frankly acknowledged. But with regard to the wickedness of the hearts and conduct of mankind, it is denied, that the providence and agency of God have any influence or concern whatever. But how can mankind be independent in wickedness, any more than in holiness? And how does the agency of divine providence, by producing, in mysterious ways, the wickedness of mankind, destroy their free agency? any more than by producing their holiness? The holy scriptures do not hesitate, in the least degree, to admit divine agency, or the mysterious agency of divine providence, even in bringing about the most wicked conduct of mankind, as well as their most virtuous conduct. The wicked, in scripture, are called God's sword, from which David prayed to be delivered, when he was persecuted by his enemies. By

this sword of the Lord, was the Saviour cruelly put to death; when, by wicked hands, he was crucified and slain. But, to this death he was delivered, by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God. The purpose, and providential agency of God are expressed in these words: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones," the lambs of his flock. From the scriptures it is evident, that God has continual access to the hearts of sinners, to harden or to soften them, as, in infinite wisdom, he sees fit. In his holy providence, he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and the hearts of the Egyptians. In plain and unequivocal language, the Psalmist says, "He turned their heart to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with his servants." In equally plain terms, Solomon declares the same truth. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will." And again, "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Is it not evident from the scriptures, that God, by the agency of his holy providence, disposes the hearts and actions of all men, according to his good pleasure? and that he does it in a way, to us mysterious; yet perfectly consistent with their moral liberty and free agency? In this case, there is no more mystery, no more difficulty, than in men's being *created* moral agents. "God made man upright. In the image of God created he him." He was made holy, and his holiness implied moral liberty, and moral character. Had he not been made upright, he must have been made a sinner; and a sinner in the possession and exercise of moral liberty, and free agency. Without free agency, a man can be neither holy nor sinful. He cannot be a rational and accountable creature. But really, I think it to be clear and demonstrable, that the providential agency of God infringes no more on the moral liberty and free agency of mankind, than his creative agency. Both are perfectly consistent with that moral liberty or free agency of man, which consists wholly in the dispositions and voluntary exercises of the heart. Where else can we look for free agency? In what else can it consist, but in acting freely, without compulsion or coercion?

In what can it consist but in acting from choice ? and in the view of motives ? To act from design and inclination of heart, is to act freely ; and this is what is meant by free agency. It does not at all imply, that we act independently, nor that we act without a cause. God says, by the prophet, “ I will cause you to walk in my statutes.” But if we walk voluntarily, we are free agents, whether caused or uncaused. Nor does free agency imply a self-determining power in the will. This would imply an act of self-determination antecedent to the first act, and as a cause of the first act, which is an absurdity. Besides ; if self-determination is the cause of action, it destroys moral liberty and free agency, as effectually as for God to be the cause of action. Nothing is gained, therefore, but every thing is lost, by the doctrine of self-determination. Surely, if there must be a cause of action ; as there is undoubtedly ; then it is of infinite importance, that God should be the cause. For he alone is capable of causing all actions, and all things to take place in a manner that shall be for the display of his own glory, and for the greatest good of the universe. In his providential government and direction of all things, there is infinite safety, and infinite good. There is a ground of strong consolation.

Such is the doctrine of divine providence, a glorious doctrine ! Well becoming the high and holy character of Jehovah ! Without such a providential administration, the universe could not subsist ; or if it could subsist, it would be to no valuable purpose. From the work of creation alone, no good could ever result. Partial evils could never terminate in the greater good. Sin and misery would be subject to no restraint ; and would have no bounds. Nor could we ever hope to profit by adversity, nor by abuses. Dark and dreadful would be our prospects, could we not rely, with confidence, on the universality and perfection of God's providential government.

We may now proceed to some inferential and practical improvement of this doctrine. And,

1. We clearly infer from it, that every thing will be overruled for the best. In this world, we experience much darkness and sorrow. Comparatively few things wear a favourable aspect. The positive pains and sorrows of this life are thought, by many, to be more and greater than the positive pleasures. “ Man is born to

trouble, as the sparks that fly upward." Philosophers are unable to determine whether there be a God ; or if a God exists, whether he be a good, or an evil being ; or whether he may not be of a mixed character. But, from the view we have taken of God's works of providence, it is evident that every thing will be overruled for the best. The good effects of the sorest evils are often realized. And we may rest assured, that the honour of God, and the greatest general good, are infinitely secure.

2. A view of God's works of providence leads the mind to that reverence and godly fear, which beget true devotion. To whom can the man devote himself, who ascribes many events to his own wisdom and power, and the rest to chance or fate ? A sense of the presence and majesty of God, as the great disposer of all things, inspires true devotion, and reverential fear.

3. An abiding sense of God's universal providence, is happily calculated to quiet the mind in adversity. Adversity is often produced by the wicked and abusive conduct of our fellow-men. If, in this case, we overlook the hand of providence, we become outrageous ; we meditate vengeance. But if we consider the wicked abuser as the sword of the Lord, to chastise us for our sins ; we are relieved ; we are cured of a spirit of revenge. So that, while we justly blame and condemn our oppressors, we shall pity and pray for them, as Christ did for his murderers ; " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." " Let him alone, and let him curse ; for the Lord hath said unto him, curse David."

Again ; no small part of our adversity is the effect of our own folly and wickedness. If, in this case, we overlook the hand of God, we shall have extreme mortification ; but no sincere and hearty repentance : no consolation in view of the evils which we have brought on ourselves. But if we believe, that God sits at the helm of government, and causes every thing we do, good or bad, to be overruled and directed to the most important ends ; we have a solid ground of comfort, even though we are deeply wounded with a sense of sin and guilt. This was the method taken by Joseph, to comfort his wicked brethren, who had sold him into Egypt. " It was not you that sent me hither, but God. God sent me before you, to save your lives, by a great deliverance." " As for you,

ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.^{yy} While they humbled themselves in the dust, under a sense of their great wickedness and barbarity, in selling their brother for a slave; he would not have them vexed and tormented. "Now therefore," said Joseph, "be not grieved and angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. For God did send me before you to preserve life." Be humble and penitent for your enormous crime, viewed as your own act and deed. But, viewed as an event of a wise and holy providence, set your hearts at rest. It is a matter of great consolation, that evils, both natural and moral, can be, and certainly will be, overruled for the greatest possible good of Christ's kingdom.

4. The doctrine of God's universal providence emboldens his people to put their trust in him. Should God give up the disposal of some things to the decision of blind chance, or stubborn fate; confidence in him would be at once destroyed. In this sinful world, there is no rational comfort and joy, but what is grounded on true faith and confidence in God. But this joyful confidence depends on the doctrine of his universal providence. Set aside this precious doctrine, and every christian would lose *that hope which is as an anchor to his soul*. To human view, this world is a hopeless state. No man, without a revelation of God's merciful designs towards sinful men, could have indulged a hope of final happiness; and this hope, after all, is liable to be extinguished, if we lose sight of a universal, superintending, and all controlling providence. Trust in the Lord must be absolute, and unlimited. "Trust in the Lord, with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding? in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." These are commands, never to be obeyed, unless we believe and realize, that God, in his mysterious providence, directs and controls all the events of the vast universe. Those who deny the doctrine of a universal and particular providence, must put their trust in a God that cannot save. "But blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

ESSAY VII.

The Sovereignty of God.

THE universal agency of God, in his providential government, implies his holy and wise *sovereignty*. The sovereignty of God, as the idea is expressed in the holy scriptures, consists in his "*working all things after the counsel of his own will.*" It relates most particularly to his governing providence over mankind. God expresses his sovereignty in these words, "I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." He is also celebrated as a sovereign in these words; "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph; for the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." As a mighty conqueror, he subdues all the enemies of his church. As a king, he reigns especially in Zion; but his holy sovereignty is bounded only by the utmost limits of the created universe. A more distinct idea of the sovereignty of Jehovah, may be conceived, by a view of the sovereignty of human governments.

Nations which are subject to an unlimited monarchy, have their sovereigns, denominated kings, or emperors, who give law to the people, and control all authority in the nation, or empire. And this is not the worst form of government, provided the sovereign be a man possessed of great wisdom, and integrity of heart. No nation ever enjoyed a better government than that of Solomon, who was an absolute sovereign. Such was the form of government in Israel, from and after the reign of king Saul. And never was a nation more happy in its government, when their kings *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*. This form of government, however, did not, in that case, meet the divine approbation, because it was needless; and was a rejection of that form of government which the Lord had assigned them; and because God foresaw the great oppressions and cruelties which, through the pride and ambition of their kings, would grow out of it. Accordingly it is said, "He gave them a king in his anger." Their king became a scourge of their pride and

ambition. These were the consequences of having wicked, oppressive, and idolatrous tyrants on the throne. The objection, therefore, as respects human government, is not so much against sovereignty in itself considered, as a form of government; as it is against *the wicked abuse of sovereignty*. But against the sovereignty of God, no such objection can be supported; for it is an infinitely wise and holy sovereignty. It is calculated to promote the peace and welfare of all his peaceable subjects; and to suppress the wicked and rebellious.

To bring out more fully the idea of God's sovereignty, we observe further; it consists in his doing his pleasure, in the government and disposal of all his intelligent creatures, in heaven and in earth; or throughout his vast universe. "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" Not only is his kingdom universal; but it is also everlasting. "And I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever and ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." In all the operations of his government, he is perfectly independent. In him are counsel and might. He needs none to give him advice. He is said to be "in one mind, and none can turn him; and what his soul desireth, even that he doth." The holy sovereignty of God is not only illustrated, but celebrated, as a most joyful theme, in many of the Psalms of David. The following selections are a specimen. "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him; for he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Another sublime passage is this; "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself. The world also is established, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting." Again, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about

him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." The royal title of Jehovah is, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." As such he was joyfully acknowledged and extolled, by all the saints of old. The holy Saviour also, in his state of incarnation, rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things," that is, the things of his kingdom, "from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." The Apostles were often led, by the spirit of inspiration, most strongly to express the idea of divine sovereignty. The act of predestination is peculiarly a sovereign act of God. "Whom he did fore-know, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. In the ninth chapter to the Romans, we have a striking and glorious exhibition of the sovereignty of divine grace. This is said to have been manifested, in giving Jacob the preference to Esau. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." In his unsearchable wisdom and justice, God had determined, that Jacob, and not Esau, should be the Patriarch of his church. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." This sovereign right to dispose of nations, and of individuals, for a display of his glory, was what was always claimed by him, in ancient ages. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." And here is added the particular idea, that *God* is the King of kings. "For he saith unto Pharaoh," the haughty king of Egypt, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up," exalted thee to the throne of Egypt; "that I might shew my power in thee; and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Here the Apostle listens to the only conceivable objection. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" As if there could have been no fault, on the part of Pharaoh, unless he actually resisted, and defeated, the sovereign and holy will of the Almighty! "Nay but, O

man! who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Does your sin (if you acknowledge any sin) consist in your being *made thus?* or in your voluntary exercises and conduct, after you commenced your existence? Let reason, as well as scripture, decide the controversy. But, with regard to the power and right of the great Sovereign of the universe, in the act of creation, "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endureth, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" If God, by his universal sovereignty, makes the most ample display of his glory, in perfect consistency with the free agency and moral liberty of mankind; what shall we say to these things? What is our objection? Can we hope to dethrone the Almighty? Who then shall hold the throne? Thus the ninth of Romans expresses without reserve, the absolute sovereignty of God, as respects his discriminating grace, which is manifested in the salvation of one people, or one sinner, rather than another. This holy and wise sovereignty he claims, as his own right and prerogative; a right which he can never relinquish, unless he relinquish his Godhead.

Keeping in view the general explanation of God's sovereignty, that it consists in doing his pleasure, directing and controlling all events in the vast universe; we may proceed to notice some particulars, in which his sovereignty is strikingly manifested. In the creation of the world, and in arranging the order of the heavens and the earth, "With whom took he counsel? or who instructed and taught him in the path of judgment?" Did he not make all things for himself? even for the display of his own glory? Also in his providential government of the world, has it not appeared clearly, from the view we have taken of the works of divine providence, that, in all his works, God acts the part of an absolute sovereign? Who ever dictated, or in any measure influenced the divine administration? God does not even *give account* of any of his matters; nor does it become us, in any case, to say unto

him, "What dost thou?" Also in the great and astonishing plan and work of salvation by the Mediator, the sovereignty of God is wonderfully displayed. Mankind were so far from dictating this glorious plan, that when it was revealed, it met with opposition. Without a revelation from God, who could have devised the plan of salvation by an infinite atonement? It was most surely, an act of self-moved, sovereign, infinite wisdom, goodness and grace, which was displayed by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and of the plan of salvation by his cross. Equally, if not more abundantly, is the sovereign grace of God displayed in the application of the atonement, by the actual conviction and conversion of sinners. When we witness the special revival of religion, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and see one and another hopefully brought into the kingdom of Jesus Christ; we are witnesses of divine sovereignty. In no other way can we account for the conviction and conversion of sinners. For it is a known fact, as well as a testimony of Christ, that sinners *will not come unto him, that they may have life*; and of Christ it is said, that his people shall be willing, in the day of his power. In the conversion of sinners, we notice the exceeding greatness of the power and sovereignty of Jehovah. In nothing does the holy sovereignty of God appear more conspicuously, than in the great plan and work of salvation by the Redeemer; and especially in carrying into effect this glorious plan, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally; The sovereignty of God appears *in every thing*. To this is owing all our prosperity, and all our adversity. "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" To him it belongs to wound and to heal, to kill and to make alive. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen." The subject leads to

REMARKS.

1. In attending to this subject we should be cautious of all prejudice against names and titles. We are liable to attach to the word sovereignty, an idea of something odious and detestable, and on this account, to harbour a prejudice against the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

Could another term be substituted, more expressive of God's kingly office, we should have no objection. But why should this term be more offensive, when applied to God, who is the King of kings, than when applied to the best of earthly kings? "I am a great *King*, saith the Lord of hosts." Wherein does this differ from his saying, "I am a great *Sovereign*, saith the Lord of hosts?" In both terms, the infinite holiness of God is equally understood. And it is to be feared, that those who object to this term, which is in so common use, and is so well understood; have a secret, if not an open abhorrence of the true doctrine of divine sovereignty.

2. Assured as we are, of all the divine perfections, and especially, of the infinite holiness of God, which as we have found, comprises all his moral perfections; who can avoid rejoicing in his government? Who can cherish a wish to escape from the absolute dominion of Jehovah? Is not the greatest welfare and happiness of the universe suspended on his wise and holy sovereignty? Is not this the ground of every christian's consolation? If this foundation were destroyed, *what could the righteous do?* Dethrone, in your hearts, the Holy One of Israel, and your case is hopeless. Without the sovereignty of God, the universe also must go to ruin and destruction. And what is of infinitely more consequence is, God must lose his glory, and the great plan of redemption, must be defeated.



ESSAY VIII.

The Decrees of God.

HAVING in some of the preceding Essays, considered the marvellous works of God, his works of creation and providence, and the holy sovereignty which he exercises in all his works, especially in his government of the moral system; We may, in the next place, attend to the doctrine of his *Decrees*. For it is absurd to suppose, that his great and wonderful works, which have been brought into view, could have been performed, without any previous purpose or decree. The Psalmist, when he was

about to relate, in a way of prophecy, the glorious things to be accomplished by the Messiah, says, "I will declare the decree." These things, were the execution of a divine decree. Had there been no decree respecting the coming of Christ, and the great work of redemption, who can suppose it possible, that these works should ever have been accomplished?

In the discussion of this weighty and important subject, an attempt will be made to prove, that every event in the universe, without exception, goes to the accomplishment of the decrees of God. Of him it is said, as we have noticed already, that he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." His *working all things*, is the work of divine providence; and *the counsel of his own will* is his decree. His decree, therefore, as well as his works of providence, extends to all things. It is indeed very evident from reason, as well as scripture, that no rational being can be supposed to act without an established plan and purpose. But the plan and purpose of God constitute his decrees. Admit that he is a rational being, who acts in view of the highest motives, and the doctrine of his decrees is established. It is, at least, evident, that whatever God, or any other rational being does, by his own free and immediate agency, is done in consequence of a decree. And since we have found evidence, that God is an eternal and immutable being; it clearly follows, that all his purposes are eternal and immutable. If we consult the scriptures of truth, on this important subject, we shall find, that God has a purpose, or decree, as well as a providential agency, in the production of all events. All depend on his will and pleasure. Surely, God, who created the heavens and the earth, and the fulness thereof, so that all were pronounced very good, must have had a definite plan of operation. If not, how could he make all things for himself? How could he secure to himself the highest possible glory? How could he declare, with the least appearance of truth, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." That the decrees of God extend to all events, is evident from the universality of his providence. If the works of divine providence, or the works of creation, or any other works, extend beyond the divine decrees; then these extra works are altogether undesigned, uncontrolled, and useless. Indeed volunta-

ry actions are impossible, if they are supposed to be destitute of a purpose or decree. What is there, in the nature of things, which can prompt the divine Being to action, beyond the extent of his purpose or decree? Certainly nothing.

Corresponding with the view which we have taken of the decrees of God, we have a very lucid and scriptural definition in the shorter catechism. "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." *Decree, foreordination, and eternal purpose*, are synonymous terms. Another term, synonymous with these, is *predestination*. "Being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Eternal purpose, counsel, or decree, is always represented as preceding the works of God. For instance, the great work of creation, by which is displayed the manifold wisdom of God, is said, by the Apostle, to be "According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Also the greater works of regeneration and conversion to God, are said to be divine operations, according to the foreordination of God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Foreordination and decree are not only the same thing; but they are a thing which invariably precedes the great work of divine grace, in the regeneration and conversion of sinners; and all other divine works of every name and nature whatsoever.

The doctrine of God's decrees, which is now under consideration, is still further evident from his absolute foreknowledge of all things. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" or from eternity. But the foreknowledge of God, depends on the fixed certainty of the things foreknown. It is impossible that any future event should be known, unless it be unalterably fixed, and rendered certain of an existence. But how can any event, which is yet future, be rendered

certain, by any means short of the purpose and will of God? Without these, nothing can be established; and without being established, nothing can be known. Thus the foreknowledge of God depends entirely on his decrees. In the order of nature, therefore, his decree must be antecedent to his foreknowledge, and must be the only ground of it. God is the cause, the designing and efficient cause of all the objects and events which he foreknows. The order of expression in the scriptures, sometimes implies, that the decree of God precedes his foreknowledge. Particularly, in what is said concerning the delivering of Christ to be crucified. "Him being delivered, by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain." To show, that there is strictly speaking no succession, no fore nor after, in the divine mind; the decree and foreknowledge of God are expressed as being equally eternal. For instance, it is said, "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The decrees of God evidently extend to all events; because such is the extent of his knowledge. Omniscience evidently rests on the divine decrees. Eternal foreknowledge, which most people allow and admit to be an essential attribute of God; presupposes an eternal decree. So that if one is denied, the other must be denied. In scripture it is affirmed, that "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do." Of course, all things are unalterably fixed in the divine mind. For if this were not the case, nothing that is future could be known, even by the Deity himself. For nothing but certainties and realities can possibly be the objects of knowledge.

Still further to confirm the doctrine of God's decrees, let it be carefully observed, that all those views and motives which have operated in the divine mind to produce any purposes or decrees, are eternally and immutably the same. But if the motives are the same, even from eternity, why not the decrees? Can it be supposed, that the divine Being foresaw from eternity, that a certain, definite system of events would make the richest display of his own glory, and in the highest possible degree, promote the general good; and yet, that he neglected to ratify and establish that system, by his decree? If so, where is the

evidence of his goodness? If all the benevolent motives of God's decrees existed in eternity, as well as in time; how could he be disposed to suspend his decrees, any more in eternity than in time? Most certainly, all the events of the universe are embraced in the divine decrees, which are eternally and immutably the same.

We observe further: that the decrees of God are strikingly evident from the prophecies contained in scriptures. When David was about to utter a glorious prophecy, he said, "I will declare the decree." In uttering prophecy, God is said to "declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done." And this declaration, in a most striking manner, expresses the divine decrees, "Saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*" This clearly implies, that the declarations of prophecy are only the previous revelation of the counsel and pleasure of God. Prophecy is only the expression of foreknowledge. And as foreknowledge depends on a previous decree, by which things foreknown are made certain; the same is true respecting prophecy. It is the revelation of things previously and eternally established. It is remarkable, respecting the prophecies of scripture, that they relate many things, which, in human view, are very improbable, and seemingly impossible; and many things which depend on the free agency of men to accomplish. What security can there be for the accomplishment of the prophecies, except a divine decree? If God has determined all events, by an immutable decree, then the prophecies are perfectly easy: but if only one future event be left undetermined, it cannot be foretold.

Again; If the counsel and purpose of God extend to events, which are brought about by human wickedness; then we may conclude with certainty, that they extend to all other events. But we find in the scriptures many instances of great wickedness, in which the counsel and purpose of God are expressly acknowledged. When the Jewish council released Peter and John from confinement, and from persecution, on account of their preaching and miracles; "They being let go went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard *that*, they lift up their voice to God with one accord." They unit-

ed in joyful and solemn prayer ; the substance of which is worthy of careful attention, in reference to the great doctrine of God's eternal counsel or decrees. And they said, " Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth and the sea ; and all that in them is ; who, by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." If the hand and counsel of God foredetermined the whole that was done, by the awful combination of Jews and gentiles against the Lord Jesus Christ, (and this was certainly the case ; for we read in plain terms, that he was delivered by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God,) then we may safely conclude, that all things are foredetermined. That same eternal and unchangeable counsel of God, by which Joseph was sold into Egypt ; by which Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and the hearts of the Egyptians ; by which the heart of Sihon, king of Heshbon, was hardened, and his spirit was made obstinate ; by which Shimei cursed David ; by which the heathen nations were often sent against the people of Israel to chastise them for their idolatry, particularly in the instance of the Babylonish captivity ; and by which our Lord was crucified ; extends to all creatures and things. From these striking instances, in which human wickedness is manifested, we are, as it were, impelled to the conclusion, that, the eternal counsel of God extends to all things, ordering and directing them for the richest display of his own glory ; and for the greatest good of the intelligent system. If some, and not all things, were established by the divine purpose, or decree, what an awful interference would exist between things decreed, and things not decreed ! The universe would be void of harmony, and present a scene of dire confusion. All things decreed would be frustrated ; nothing could ever come to a happy termination. In this view, how infinitely important, for the honour of God, and for the consolation of all holy and intelligent creatures, is the doctrine of

divine decrees! The decrees of God are evidently a necessary fountain and source of all rational enjoyment, of all rational hope, and expectation of final good.

Finally; It is evident from reason, that God cannot be indifferent, respecting any event of creation or providence. If his providence extends to all his creatures, and all their actions; then certainly his decrees are of equal extent. For, in all instances, and in all respects, his works of providence are the execution of his decrees. "God executeth his decrees," say the assembly of divines, "in his works of creation and providence." And the very idea of his having a preference or choice respecting any system of events, amounts to a firm decree. To bring the world into existence, nothing more was necessary, than an expression of the divine will. "He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast." He preferred the existence to the non-existence of the world; and it existed, in consequence of his decree. If it be admitted, that God is not indifferent to any event, however small and minute, even to the falling of a sparrow; the consequence is clear, that all events whatever are ordered and established by his eternal purpose or decree.

REMARKS.

1. All the purposes or decrees of God are the fruit of infinite wisdom, goodness, and benevolence. Some are alarmed at the doctrine of divine decrees, from an apprehension, that it represents the Most High as an arbitrary sovereign, and a despotic being, regardless of reason or propriety. But far be it from the Holy One of Israel to decree unrighteous decrees, or to be regardless of reason and benevolence, in forming his eternal counsels. The holiness of God, in which are included all his moral perfections, has been already proved from scripture and reason. In the exercise of perfect holiness, therefore, he forms all his purposes. All are formed with an undeviating regard to the greatest possible good. Every man who has a candid mind, and who is given to sober reflection, must be sensible, that among all possible systems of events, there must be one, that has an infinite preference to all others; and, that the omniscient Jehovah, who

comprehends, from eternity, all these systems, doubtless discovers that which, all things considered, is infinitely best. And since he is the Judge of all the earth, it is certain that he does, and always will do right. This best of all systems, therefore, is established by the divine decree.

All the purposes of God are equally the result of infinite wisdom, goodness and mercy. We have therefore an ample and joyful assurance, that these purposes can never be altered for the better. This consideration should fully satisfy every mind with respect to the truth of the doctrine, and the importance of its being taught and inculcated. If the decrees of God are essential to his own glory, and to secure the greatest sum of good and happiness in the universe; then certainly, every benevolent heart must be satisfied; and must greatly rejoice, though the subject may be involved in a degree of mystery.

2. Another thing to be considered, in relation to the doctrine of the divine decrees is, that the means by which all events are accomplished, are as much the subject of God's eternal purpose or decree, as the events themselves. An objection urged by some against this glorious doctrine is, that it renders the means of grace and salvation, and the means of every other good end whatever, both needless and useless. If men are predestinated to salvation, say some, they will be saved, and if to damnation, they will be damned, let them do what they may. And the same objection is urged, or might, with equal propriety, be urged in every other case. If it is the decree of God, that we shall live, we shall live; and if, that we shall die, do what we will, we shall die. If it be the decree of God that we shall be rich or poor, healthy or sickly, such we shall be, at all events. This is a rash and groundless inference from the doctrine of divine decrees. It is contrary to scripture, reason and experience. The scriptures require true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the condition of salvation. If men believe not, they must be damned. Faith is a practical duty; and is the means of salvation. And the scriptures carry the idea of means still further. They affirm, that faith itself, *cometh by hearing*; and hearing by the word of God. Reason and observation teach us, that salvation, and all other things, take place in a regular course of means and ends. So long as the means of good are neglected, the good is never to

be obtained. When Paul, and a multitude with him were in great danger of perishing in a shipwreck, a divine decree was revealed for their consolation, that all should be delivered from the danger of the seas. After this, the danger increased, so that the sailors were about to make their escape by the boat. At this Paul was alarmed, notwithstanding the decree; and declared, that except these, who alone could manage the vessel, should abide in the ship, they could not be saved. Thus it is plain, that means are as absolutely necessary to accomplish the decrees of God; as the decrees are to the success of means. Those therefore, who cavil with the doctrine of the divine decrees, on this ground, "speak evil of the things which they understand not."

3. Since the decrees of God extend to all events, and at the same time, human purposes and agency operate, in innumerable instances, and to accomplish innumerable purposes; we clearly infer, that divine and human agency are exerted in producing the self-same events. Clearly to this point are the words of the Apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." So far as the people of God have any right purposes, or exercises of heart, these purposes and exercises are as entirely their own, as if they were originated in themselves, without any divine decree, or any other extraneous cause whatever. At the same time, it is plain, that every right exercise is wrought in them, according to the eternal purpose, and good pleasure of God. The same idea is expressed in the prophecy of Ezekiel. In the first place, sinners are exhorted even to make themselves a new heart, and a new spirit, and to turn themselves from all their transgressions. In the next place, the Lord says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Here it is evident, that both divine and human agency are employed in the production of the new heart. David in prayer expressed the same idea. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a right spirit." God is the sole cause of holy exercises in the hearts of sinful men; but sinners are, at the same time, required to be holy in heart and life: and whenever holiness takes

place in their hearts, it consists in their own voluntary agency, and not in the agency of God. The agency of God as the cause of human agency, in this case, alters not the nature of human agency, in any measure, nor in any sense whatever. Both God and man act freely, of choice, and not of constraint or compulsion.

4. From a consideration of the great and solemn doctrine of divine decrees, we learn, that by them, every good is secured; and every evil, which is not essential, in the plan of infinite wisdom and goodness, to bring about the greatest general good, is prevented. What a glorious doctrine is this! How happily calculated to give us the most sublime and exalted views of the infinite Jehovah! Calculated to abase all human pride, and vain glorying! Calculated to inspire us with a reverential awe and fear of the Lord, and to excite in our minds an unlimited confidence in him! Nothing is better calculated to excite religious devotion. To those who cordially embrace this doctrine, the infinite God appears to be worthy of praise and adoration; and to him be rendered dominion and glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



ESSAY IX.

The original Character, and State of Man.

WHEN the Almighty God, by the word of his power, had created the heavens and the earth, and all their hosts, in the space of six days; it was reserved as the concluding part, and the finishing stroke, of this magnificent work, to create mankind. Man was made rational and immortal. God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Man also sustained a dignified rank; he was made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. Possessed of reason and understanding, man was well qualified for the elevated station allotted him in this lower world. Accordingly, "God gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." And in the conclusion of the narrative, it is said, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good."

From this concise history of the creation of man, it is very natural and reasonable to understand, that he was made perfectly holy. Like every thing else in its kind, man also in his kind, was pronounced very *good*. He was doubtless created a moral agent ; for this was essential to distinguish him from the brute creation. And if, as a moral agent, he was, by his Creator, pronounced *very good* ; what could it imply, short of his being perfectly free from sin ? Being a moral agent, he was capable of being holy or sinful, even in his very nature, and in the disposition of his heart. And as his moral nature and faculties constituted infinitely the most noble part of his existence ; it is evident, that his goodness, which was pronounced by his Creator, consisted chiefly in righteousness and true holiness.

But, to establish this point, we are not straitened for evidence. The testimony of the wise man is, “ God made man upright ; but he hath sought out many inventions.” By these many inventions, is doubtless meant wicked devices. For these are stated as a contrast to that uprightness, in which his original character consisted. Consequently, his original character was holy. In the scriptures, uprightness is a term expressive of the moral character, and of that only. It is always expressive of holiness. “ Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” The Lord is said to be upright, and “ the prayer of the upright is his delight.”

Again ; If man was created with a sinful, or even a mixed character ; how are we to understand the history of his apostasy ? From what did he apostatize ? Did he apostatize from a state of sinfulness, or of holiness ? Certainly from a state of holiness. Had he been created with a mixed character, such would have been the account of him, in the history of his apostasy. Had he been of a mixed character, he must have been, in some degree, unhappy in Paradise.

Some suppose, that if man was made holy, his holiness must have been passive, and involuntary, and void of moral quality. This goes on the supposition, that God cannot create a moral agent ; and of course, cannot form the hearts of mankind, and turn them from sin to holiness, after they are created. But is not the king's heart in the

hand of the Lord? and does he not, as the rivers of water, turn it whithersoever he will? However philosophical men may appear, in denying the power of God to create moral agents, yet they are directly opposed to divine testimony. For when all things were prepared for the creation of man, who was to be, in his creation, infinitely more noble than any of the creatures he had made, the Lord said, "Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Although the image of God may sometimes imply the rational faculties of the man; yet not excluding the more noble faculties. Nor could it be said, with the least propriety, that man was made in the image of God, and hereby greatly dignified; unless he was made holy as God is holy. In this sense, Paul understood the image of God, as we learn from his exhortation; "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God," that is, after the likeness or image of God, "is created in righteousness and true holiness." Another passage, of the same import, is this, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of God." The holiness of the Lord is that in which his transcendent glory chiefly consists. To be changed into the same image, therefore, is to be made holy as he is holy.

From this illustration of the image of God, which is, in a measure, restored to man in regeneration, it is evident, that the image of God, in his creation, consisted in righteousness and true holiness. When God created rational and moral beings, such as angels and men, he formed their moral character—as the Psalmist says, "He fashioned their hearts alike;" that is, *equally*, or one as well as another. God is the Father of our spirits, as well as the former of our bodies. All that appertained to man, in the day of his creation, as to faculties or character, was the effect of creative power and goodness. God manifested his complacency in mankind as soon as they were created; and furnished them with a Paradise, full of delights. He treated them as his friends, and the objects of his parental care and affection. He abounded in expressions of his love, which would have been utterly inconsistent, had they not been in a state of perfect holiness. In the

plain and obvious sense of the words, therefore, "God made man upright."

As to the *state* of mankind, in which they were created ; it was a state of felicity. It was a state of mind perfectly free from all selfish and corrupt affections, perfectly free from envy, malice, or ill will ; perfectly joyful in God, and submissive to his will ; perfectly free from shame, remorse or regret ; full of joy in God, and in his holy and wise government. The bodily state, in which man was created, was as happy as a bodily existence is capable of being made. Of all possible worldly delights, the first parents of our race had a fulness. These were doubtless received with great thankfulness of heart, though they constituted but a small part of human felicity. The highest felicity of man, in his original state, was of a heavenly nature ; but probably fell short of the happiness of heaven in its degree. Man was made a little lower than the angels, and capable of a less degree of felicity. In their original state, mankind experienced no tokens of divine displeasure ; but the highest tokens of divine approbation. Man was, indeed, destined to moderate and pleasing labour ; but to suffer no inclement seasons, no painful embarrassments ; no ill success, in all their labours for a subsistence. Adam and Eve performed their pleasant labour in the garden of Eden, *to keep it and to dress it*. Their labour might be attended with a degree of weariness ; and probably with a degree, suited exactly to sweeten the hours of rest.

Though mankind might not, in their original state, have been made altogether invulnerable ; yet they might, and probably did, in a remarkable degree, enjoy divine protection. So that, in fact, they suffered no real evils, in consequence of their partaking of flesh and blood. The world, in its original state, was exactly fitted for the accommodation of man, and of all the living creatures, which were subject to his dominion. All yielded a willing and peaceful subjection : and all were at peace among themselves. The earth was made perfectly convenient and fruitful, perfectly healthful and pleasant ; and since man was so exalted and dignified, in this lower world ; we may conclude, that, in his state of innocence, he had very little, if any occasion for an unpleasant sensation of body or mind.

Another thing which rendered the state of man, before

the fall, peculiarly happy was, the anticipation of a more happy and glorious immortality. This world, beautiful and happy as it was, in its primeval state ; was not formed for the final and everlasting residence of mankind. Our first parents were doubtless taught to look forward, and hope for a more exalted state of existence among the holy angels, and the glorious Cherubim and Seraphim in heaven. They were taught to consider this world as a state of probation for one inconceivably more glorious and happy. Had they fulfilled the duties of their probationary state, their exit from this bodily state of existence would have been like that of Enoch and Elijah. Probably they anticipated this glorious result of their probation, with but little apprehension of the danger of apostasy. And their holy souls were feasted, from day to day, with the prospect of heavenly felicity. This must have added exceedingly to the happiness of their original state of existence.

Thus we find, that the original character and state of mankind, were indeed, *very good*. Their moral character was sinless, and their probationary state was happy. They enjoyed, in addition to every worldly good, the light of God's countenance, and his love shed abroad in their hearts. And, in a review of the holy and happy state of our first parents, we are led to notice the great goodness and benignity of our Heavenly Father, in providing so richly for the welfare of the great family of mankind. Had they only been faithful and persevering in obedience to God, how happy would they have been, in their successive generations ! There would have been no death, nor sorrow, nor crying ; no pestilence that walketh in darkness, and no destruction that wasteth at noon day. This world would have been a state of perfect peace and plenty ; and the earth would have been full of the goodness of God.

In a further review of this subject, we learn, that holiness is essential to happiness. It was so before the fall of man ; and it is so still. Do we begin to look for the happiness of the millennial state ? then to hasten it on, we must cultivate holiness. By holiness, we may anticipate much of the blessedness of that day ; as Abraham did of the day of Christ's incarnation. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad."

ESSAY X.

The Moral Law, or Covenant of Works.

IN attending to the original character and state of mankind, we readily discover, that they were made proper subjects of moral law and government. To explain the moral law of God, which is called *the covenant of works*, will be the object of this Essay.

The holy law of God, which is the only rule of righteousness, equally binding on all rational creatures, requires the exercise of perfectly holy love, or good will towards all beings capable of happiness or misery. In conformity to this great standard of righteousness, we find the law which God had enjoined on mankind, and which Christ, at his coming, recognized, and even magnified and vindicated; was comprised in two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the great principle of righteousness. This, for substance, was doubtless the law given to the angels, at their creation, as well as to our first parents. This is the law of nature, obligatory on every rational being in the universe. It is rendering to all their due. Every being is entitled to that measure of love and regard, which is in exact proportion to his dignity and importance in the scale of existence. God is infinite in dignity and importance, and is, therefore, worthy of supreme love. Mankind, generally speaking, are our equals; therefore to be loved as ourselves. This love, which, being perfectly reduced to practice, is the fulfilling of the law, is required to exist and to be cherished in the heart: and to operate as an established moral temper and disposition, in all the fruits of love and obedience to God. All the actions and conduct of rational creatures, are required to be such as naturally flow from this holy principle. Such are the requirements of the law of God.

In addition to this general law, the reasonableness of which is plain and obvious to the weakest capacity; God has in his infinite wisdom, and sovereign good pleasure, delivered to mankind certain particular statutes, require-

ments, and prohibitions, which belong not to the law of nature, strictly speaking; and are obligatory, only on the ground of his positive institution, and requirement. Of such a nature was the prohibition of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. The fruit in its nature, was harmless. It was apparently, perhaps really, the most precious of all the trees in Paradise. But, for infinitely wise and important reasons, it was *forbidden*. But this prohibition, when it was made known to Adam and Eve, became, to them, an important part of the moral law of God. Of this kind were all the ceremonial and typical rites and institutions, delivered by Moses. These laws were all of a moral nature, and binding on the Israelites, merely because God had made them so. In the eye of Omniscience, reasons of infinite importance existed for the whole ceremonial and typical system of laws and statutes. Even the ordinances of Christ, baptism and the sacramental supper, are established, not by the light of nature, but by the positive institution and authority of Jesus Christ. But where is the Christian who rejects the ordinances of the gospel, because they are not the laws of nature? All the positive precepts and prohibitions in the scriptures, are by faith in the true God and Saviour, regarded as parts of the moral law; and the attentive and candid mind does, from time to time, gain a knowledge of the ends and designs of those laws which have once appeared mysterious. Types are explained by their antitypes, as prophecies are by their accomplishment. By the prohibition of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, our first parents were put on the most important and interesting probation, which can be conceived. Life and death were set before them in the most striking manner; in a manner calculated greatly to enhance their dignity and happiness, if they fulfilled the condition of life; and if they did not fulfil the condition of life, all good was forfeited for ever. "*Dying they must die.*" If they refrained from the forbidden fruit, during a suitable time of probation; it is supposed, that they were to partake of the tree of life, which was a sacramental tree; and was a token of eternal life. Like the elect angels, they were to be confirmed in a state of perfect holiness and felicity for ever. In this view, we may see the reasonableness of God's positive prohibition of the tree of knowledge of

good and evil. And doubtless, in process of time, we shall see the reasonableness of all God's positive precepts and prohibitions. Be this as it may, we are bound to regard all the laws of God as holy. "I esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right; and I hate every false way."

Having considered the nature of the divine law, which is holy, just and good; we proceed to a view of the penalty, by which it is supported and vindicated. For a law is void of force and efficacy, without a just and adequate penalty. In what then does the penalty of the law consist? The penalty of all transgressions of the law, was expressed in the threatening delivered to our first parents, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The words more strictly rendered are "*Dying thou shalt die.*" These words evidently express durable and perpetual evil; and evil of the greatest magnitude. No word conveys an idea more terrible than death. Natural death is the greatest punishment inflicted by human laws. Death, in the greatest extent of its meaning, is the penalty of the divine law. Considering the infinitely evil and heinous nature of sin against God, and all that is said in the scriptures respecting the final and eternal punishment of the wicked; there remains no doubt, but that the threatening of death to all transgressors, means eternal death; or the eternal misery both of soul and body in hell. To Adam and Eve, the just desert of sin was expressed; and when, by their apostasy, they had exposed themselves to the awful penalty, they were liable, immediately to commence an eternal death. Had natural death been all that was implied in the threatening, we see not wherein their punishment would have been greater than that of the best saints. "If Christ be in you," says the Apostle, "the body is dead because of sin." But the penalty of the law was an evil infinitely greater than the death of the body. It was what is termed *the second death*; which is allotted to the finally impenitent at the day of judgment. The ground of reprieve, when man had sinned against God, was the immediate revelation of divine mercy, through the glorious Mediator. On this new ground, this gospel ground, man commenced a second state of probation, widely different from that under the covenant of works: for this was under what is called the covenant of grace.

Still there is a diversity of opinion respecting the penalty of the law. By some it is thought to consist, chiefly, if not wholly, in what is called *spiritual death*, which is, strictly speaking, sin itself. It consists, as they suppose, in being *dead in trespasses and sins*. On this construction of the death which was threatened, the law would read thus; "In the day that thou sinnest, thou shalt become a sinner altogether: *Sinning thou shalt sin*. And thou shalt never cease from sin." This view of the penalty of the divine law appears, however, to be altogether unsatisfactory. If the punishment of the transgressor consists in sin itself, or in additional transgression; what is the distinction between crime and punishment? WHAT punishment could it be, to one already dead in trespasses and sins, to one who daily cherishes his carnal mind, which is enmity against God, to one who rejoices in iniquity; *to have his sin increased*? This would be, to a proud and selfish heart, no punishment at all. In short, this idea of the penalty of the law utterly confounds and blends sin and punishment together, making them one and the same thing.

Again; Others suppose, that the penalty of the law consists altogether in what is called eternal death. If so, whence come all other natural evils, which are equally the subject matter of divine threatenings; and as distinctly so, as eternal damnation? God has always threatened corrupt and idolatrous nations, and in many instances, he has threatened individuals for their transgressions, with great worldly calamities; and with untimely, painful and disgraceful deaths. The human race, in their fallen state, are plunged in a deluge of evils, which terminate in death. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." Death is said to be "*by sin*, and death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Let it be admitted, that, to the saints, death is no curse; but is a happy release from a world of trouble. But would it not be happier still, like Enoch and Elijah, and like the generation of the saints at the last day, to be changed in a moment, and to escape all the pains of a lingering dissolution? On the whole, it is evident, that punishment consists in natural evils; and that without sin no natural evils would have taken place, under the holy government of God. Why may we not then consider every pain and sorrow as a threatened consequence of the fall of man, and

as a part of the curse of the divine law? Eternal death is indeed, infinitely the greatest part, and swallows up the whole of the punishment of transgressors. All other evils, are as *light afflictions for a moment*, compared with eternal death, which is the consummation of the penalty of the divine law.* To me it appears, that the events of divine providence, since the apostasy of man, explain the curse of the law. The immediate consequences of the fall were, that our first parents were filled with shame and remorse, terror and amazement. They sought to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. God then arraigned them before him, and denounced on them many temporal evils, terminating in natural death. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." All these natural evils were manifestly included in the penalty of the law. Even the afflictions of the saints, as well as all other evils, are the fruits of the apostasy; though, like all other things, afflictions work together for their good. Still they *are evils*, in themselves considered; and like all other

* Do any query, with respect to the view which is here given of the penalty of the law, as implying natural death, whether the soul of man, *only*, would have existed to endure eternal punishment, had the penalty been inflicted? the answer is decidedly in the negative. As the souls and bodies of the finally impenitent are to be destroyed in hell for ever, after the resurrection and final judgment; so the souls and bodies of Adam and Eve, would have been destroyed in hell, from the day of their apostasy, had the penalty been inflicted.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the natural, material and mortal bodies of fallen men would, or could have been the subjects of eternal punishment. Their mortal part must have undergone a dissolution, and must have put on immortality. But, "There is a spiritual body," which is, in its nature, incorruptible and immortal; and made capable of enduring eternal punishment. To possess this body, sinners are all doomed to die a natural death. Such is the divine constitution, that although a part of *the saints*, such as Enoch and Elijah, and the generation that shall be alive and remain at the coming of Christ to judgment, shall be changed in a moment, and never taste of death; yet all sinners must die accursed; and their resurrection must be to shame and everlasting contempt.

Truly, the bodies of sinners, in a state of resurrection, will exist for ever; and, together with their souls, will suffer the penalty of the law, which is called *the second death*. Natural and eternal death, and all the natural evils which terminate in these, are subjects of divine threatenings, and are expressions of divine wrath and vengeance. All therefore belong to the penalty of the law.

evils, brought on moral beings, they are expressions of divine displeasure. Of course, they belong to the penalty of the law.

Respecting the moral law, or covenant of works, it may be added, that the condition of eternal life was a perfect, sinless obedience. For one single transgression, the favour of God was forfeited for ever, and man fell under the curse; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And the law, both in its precepts and penalties, can never be relinquished, nor abated. *Obey and live, disobey and die*; is the language of the law. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" and not one jot or tittle shall pass from it, till all be fulfilled. The penalty is as indispensable as the precept; and both are absolutely indispensable. The law knows no mercy nor forgiveness. Only the man that doth the things required by the law, shall live by them. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." This is the condition of the covenant of works.

In a review of what has been said on the moral law of God, or what is called the covenant of works, we learn how vain it is for fallen men, who are dead in trespasses and sins, and who are under an inevitable curse, to hope for salvation by their good works. We realize from the subject, if we seriously attend to it, what is said by the Apostle Paul, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." As many as trust to their own righteousness, are under the curse. But the general character of mankind, since the fall is, that they are self-righteous, and seek salvation, if they seek it at all, by their good works. Paul was alive without the law once. Once he expected salvation by his works. "But when the commandment came, sin revived and he died." All, by nature, are under sin, and under the curse of God's law. How great must be the delusion of those, who rely on their works for salvation! To them the commandment has never come, sin has never revived in their consciences, and they have never died. They are *alive without the law*, alive to sin, alive to self-righteousness; but without a well-grounded hope; and without God in the world. They are in the most delusive road to eternal death....*Amen.*

ESSAY XI.

The Temptation and Fall of Man.

FROM a view of the moral law, or covenant of works, under which man was placed, by his all-wise Creator ; we proceed to a consideration of his temptation and apostasy. This, of all events which have come to the knowledge of mankind, is the most mysterious and the most gloomy. In itself considered, the heart sickens at the view of it. Could we not in some measure, trace the footsteps of infinite wisdom and grace, whereby this sad event is made subservient to the glory of God, and to the best interests of the moral system ; we might well despair of gaining relief in our minds, on the subject of man's apostasy. The mystery is, that man, so highly favoured of God, and made lord of this lower world, should be so easily induced to apostatize. He was created, as we have found, in a state of perfect holiness. "God made man upright." He enjoyed also, the highest degree of felicity, of which he was capable, in the present state. And beyond a doubt, he anticipated an eternal state, inconceivably more glorious. As a test of his fidelity to his God, as a probation for a state of confirmed holiness and happiness, both for himself and all his posterity, he was required to suffer but one small restriction of his natural desires. For a short time, perhaps forty days, which was the time of Christ's temptation in the wilderness ; he was required to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This requirement was pronounced very solemnly and emphatically : "In the day thou eatest thereof, *Dying thou shalt die.*" The condition of avoiding this death, and consequently, of inheriting eternal life, was most easy and practicable ; and the motives to fidelity were inconceivably powerful. But, unaccountable as it may seem, the sad event took place. Our first parents partook of the forbidden fruit. "They fell from the state, in which they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit." Seemingly with their eyes open, they yielded to the call of appetite, or curiosity ; and renouncing their confidence in God, their Creator, they presumed to take and eat. They fell under the curse of a broken law ; and involved the world

in ruins. How was this thing possible? And why was not the greatest of all evils, in this lower world, prevented, by a kind interposition of divine providence?

Hoping to gain some light on the great and mysterious subject of man's apostasy, and of the introduction of sin and misery into this world; it is proposed to take a particular view of the historical account in the scriptures; and then to attempt a solution of seeming difficulties.

The historical account is as follows: "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" By the serpent here, is to be understood, not merely the beast so named; but the *old serpent*, which is called the Devil and Satan; the enemy of God and man; and he that was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; the arch deceiver, and the subtile adversary of souls. This was the being who, in the most crafty and delusive manner, assaulted the *weaker vessel*, who was the mother of us all. He craftily proposed his temptations, through the medium of the common serpent; which, in his original state, before he became the organ of Satan, was, probably, the most lovely and beautiful of all the brute creation. It is supposed, that like man, he walked erect, with great vivacity; and lived on the most delicious fruits of the earth. All this indeed, appears evident, from his being doomed, after the fall of man, to go upon his belly; and, for his food, to lick the dust of the earth. Furnished with speech, and rational faculties, in the view of the woman, which to her appeared miraculous, it is natural to suppose, that she began to listen to the wiles of this tempter. He commenced his temptation, as we have found, by insinuating, that it was not God himself, but some other being, very envious, and unfriendly to their happiness, who had undertaken to personate their heavenly Father. "Is it your kind and benevolent Creator, or some cruel impostor, who hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' Not your God, surely; but an enemy has laid upon you this unnecessary, and cruel restriction. God, certainly, had no hand in this matter."

Eve replied, however, as if well satisfied with her God. "The woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the

fruit of the trees of the garden." We have fruit in rich abundance, in great variety, and of the most excellent kinds. We stand in need of nothing more than is freely permitted. "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Satan found he had an arduous task before him. Still he pressed his temptation; and declared positively, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" And he appeared to Eve, to be able to prove his declaration. For it is natural to suppose, that he set her an example of eating the forbidden fruit, and gave her to understand, that this precious fruit had the wonderful effect, to elevate him from brutality, to the rank of rational beings. "And God doth know," said the deceiver, "that in the day ye eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Now therefore, let who will endeavour to restrain you, in the laudable pursuit of knowledge; regard him not. He is envious, and hostile to your best interests. He defrauds you of your dearest rights. Will you tamely submit to remain in darkness and ignorance, while an inexhaustible fund of knowledge is attainable? and attainable only by tasting of the most delicious fruit? Away with all your groundless scruples! Will you, indeed, neglect the knowledge of good and evil? How then will you be able to choose the good, and to refuse the evil? Only taste of this most precious fruit, this *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, and you will find yourself in a new world; you will be full of light and joy, happy beyond expression!

Thus the arch deceiver, the father of lies, beguiled the mother of us all. "And the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." Eve, as well as others, even in her innocency, had a natural desire of knowledge; a desire, worthy to be cultivated and improved; but not by forbidden means. She had also, in her innocency, a natural curiosity, which strongly impelled her to make the experiment of the forbidden fruit. These passions of the mind were also capable of being greatly excited. Satan was aware of this, and laid his plan accordingly. Eve was a stranger to falsehood and deception; and was too unsuspecting of an evil design in the tempter. The adversary, of course, had greatly the advantage of her; which

advantage he improved in the most crafty manner : and his temptation was, alas ! fatally successful ! For it is added, that “ When the woman saw, that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.”

This is the scriptural account of the temptation and fall of Eve ; and we easily perceive, by the view which we have taken of the subject, why she partook of the forbidden fruit. She became an unbeliever in her Creator, and a believer in the serpent. “ The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat,” said the woman. This was the best reason which she could offer. She conceived, that the serpent was possessed of miraculous power, which gave him a claim to divine authority. She imagined, that there was demonstration in all the suggestions of the tempter ; and that there must have been a mistake, respecting the prohibition of the tree of knowledge. For, of all the trees in the garden, or even in the world, this appeared to be the most important.

Thus having cast off that implicit confidence in God, which reason and prudence would dictate, she presumed to claim a natural right to avail herself of the virtues and benefits of that wonderful tree. Her natural desires were inflamed, and she became impatient of divine restraint. Lust had now conceived in her heart ; and, in heart, *prior* to the external act, she revolted from God, her Creator and Preserver. She hesitated no longer ; but made the dreadful experiment. She ate, and her sin was finished. *It brought forth death.* Satan had persuaded her to quit the ground of implicit faith and confidence in God, and to rely on human reason, and follow the dictates of a carnal heart. Now she renounced the divine command, and ventured herself on new ground, *the ground of infidelity.* Thus the woman apostatized from God.

Lest any should think to excuse the weak and unexperienced woman, under so strong temptations, let it be considered, that the Lord, whom she had, from the first day of her existence, known to be the true God, had most solemnly warned and admonished her, respecting the fruit of that tree. He had given her to understand clearly, that the interdiction of this single tree, was to be the

ground of her probation for a blessed eternity ; and that all her posterity, as well as herself, should be sharers in the consequences of her probation. She had, therefore, reason to expect some small trials of her patience, and proofs of her constancy and fidelity to God. In her case, reason and prudence would have dictated, that whatever trials and temptations awaited her, she ought to have suspended eating of that one tree, until the Lord was further consulted on the subject. And least of all ought she to have consulted her husband, on a point of such infinite magnitude, and importance. The tempter was, indeed, very plausible : but can any one excuse her in embracing the first temptation ? and this without any advice or deliberation ? And especially, when nothing but self-exaltation was proposed as a motive ? “ Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

With regard to God's interposing, by his kind providence, to prevent the fatal evil, it is a sufficient reply, that he had distinctly and solemnly warned her, from the very birth of her existence, to look to him for wisdom and direction, in every case of doubt or difficulty. How absurd was it for her, on the first trial of her fidelity, to listen to the wiles of a talking serpent, rather than to the instructions of her heavenly Father ! It was surely unreasonable to hope, that God would take any further measures to prevent her apostasy. If she became disposed, so unadvisedly, and so rashly, to fall in with the suggestions of Satan, it proved, that lust had already conceived in her heart ; and in this case, God was perfectly clear and justifiable, in leaving her to act out her own wicked choice, and to forfeit his favour for ever.

How much Adam shared in the temptations of the serpent, or whether he had any share at all in them, or ever saw the serpent in the character of the tempter ; we are not informed. It is generally supposed, however, and perhaps will appear evident from the historic account of the matter, that Adam was induced to eat of the forbidden fruit, by the influence of his wife, and his confidence in her, as a help meet for him, in all cases of doubt or difficulty. Probably a separation from his beloved wife, or a state of alienation from her, was viewed by him as the greatest of all trials or temptations ; and as being absolutely intolerable. And since no visible evil, no death

nor sorrow, had yet happened to his wife, in consequence of her eating of the fruit; he was emboldened to receive it from her hands, believing as she did, that it was not only harmless, but very useful. “*He hearkened unto the voice of his wife;*” placing more confidence in her wicked advice, than in the positive instruction and prohibition of his God. Accordingly we find that when he was arraigned before the Lord, and called to an account for his conduct, his only apology was this, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” The fact was, that both of them, in one and the same day, yielded to those temptations which they considered to be absolutely irresistible. Both of them, so far as we can judge from the history, were about equally guilty in the sight of God. Both died, the same day, a spiritual death; and both became exposed to temporal and eternal death.

We now proceed to a solution of seeming difficulties which attend this intricate subject. The difficulties have been stated in part already, but not discussed. How could our first parents, who were perfectly holy in heart, be disposed to comply with the temptations of Satan? And how could a kind and benevolent God, who perfectly foresaw the consequences, permit the adversary to assault them, in the infancy of their existence, and exult in their ruin?

Some suppose that God has no control of the hearts and wills of moral agents, whether men or devils. Of course, all that could be done in the case, was to *forbid* the temptations of Satan, and forbid the tree of knowledge of good and evil, to our first parents, setting before them the proper motives to obedience and fidelity. They consider all moral beings as possessing a power of self-determination, whereby they act, in a sense, independently. They hold also, that God could not perfectly foreknow the part that Adam and Eve would act, under the temptation of Satan, till they acted their part in a fatal apostasy. But this method of accounting for the fall of man, or of angels, is altogether unsatisfactory. In a great measure, it represents the Most High to be like unto ourselves, frail and ignorant, and liable to innumerable disappointments. This method of solving the difficulty, is grossly inconsistent with reason and scripture. Certainly, “All things are

naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." And as certainly, "*all hearts, as well as the king's heart, are in the hand of the Lord : as the rivers of water, he turneth them whithersoever he will.*" "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off," says the Psalmist. From the holy scriptures we learn that God, in his providence, controls all his creatures, and even all their actions. "He hath done as he hath pleased, in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth." Christ had evidently, the control of devils, when he was in the flesh, and, in the temptation of our first parents, Satan was equally within the reach of his controlling power.

Now therefore, whether we can particularly account for the introduction of sin into this world, by the fall of man; or not, is not of the greatest consequence. We can believe the fact, that man did fall, by the temptation of Satan. We can believe it understandingly, so far as God has seen fit to explain it : and some things may now be stated, calculated to cast light on the subject, and to relieve the minds of honest and candid inquirers.

1. It is possible, in the nature of things, that finite moral beings, who are created perfectly holy, should become sinful and depraved, both in heart and practice. A created moral agent is as capable of sin, as of holiness. And God's solemn treatment of Adam and Eve, before their fall, and while they were in a state of special and particular probation for a confirmation in holiness, clearly indicated, even their *danger* of apostasy. Had there been, in their case, no danger of sin and ruin ; why did the Lord charge and admonish them, so strictly, to refrain from the interdicted tree ? Being then perfectly holy, was not, in itself considered, the least security for their perseverance in holiness : because they were very capable of transgression, and might be disposed to transgress the law of God. Holiness and sin are equally the voluntary exercises and acts of free agents ; and one is as possible as the other. We therefore see no propriety in saying, as is often said, that, "our first parents, *being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created, by sinning against God.*" They invariably enjoyed the freedom of their own will, whether in a state of perfect holiness, or perfect sinfulness. And this was essential to moral agency. Without this freedom, they would have

been utterly incapable of sin or holiness, and incapable of moral government.

2. More fully to solve the difficulty, and to account for the fall of man, which, in itself considered, was a most awful and disastrous event; the scriptures warrant us to state, that God saw it to be most for his own glory, and for the highest good of the universe, so to order events in his providential government, that sin should take place, both in men and angels. He foresaw, because he had wisely determined, that the wrath of man, and the malice of devils should praise him. So that, instead of embracing the most absurd idea, that the Almighty laboured, and laboured in vain, to prevent the introduction of moral evil; we ought to entertain the rational and consoling idea, that he always holds the throne of the universe, that he is subject to no defeat, no disappointment, no rivalry with the powers of darkness. For our great consolation, we ought to be established in the belief, that nothing can take place, under the wise and holy administration of Jehovah, more than was, from eternity, comprised in his infinitely holy and unsearchable decree. That the eternal plan and covenant of redemption, by the death of the Mediator, was embraced in the divine decree, all christians will grant. But this plan, in which the glory of God, and the welfare of his kingdom were to be most richly displayed, clearly implied the fall of men and angels. Without the fall of man, redemption would have been needless; and without the fall of angels, the part allotted to the devils could never have been acted. The whole system of redemption and salvation by grace, declared by David as a divine *decree*, clearly implies, that, by the same divine decree, sin came into the world; and has pervaded all the human race. This is the only possible way to account for the fall of man, and for every other event whatever. It is God "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

But here let it be remembered, and kept distinctly in mind, that the divine decree is a thing entirely different from the moral agency of mankind; and has no influence at all, to destroy, or in any measure, to impair human liberty or free agency. When angels and man rebelled, they rebelled against *the law of God*. This they violated; but not his decrees. Had they violated his decrees, infi-

nite reproach would have been attached to his character, and universal ruin would have been brought on the universe. But since God's counsel stands, and he has done, and will do all his pleasure; we may rest assured, that his own glory, and the best interests of the universe are secured. Though the apostasy from God, and the existence of sin and misery may seem mysterious, and most lamentable; yet there remains a most substantial ground of confidence, and rejoicing in the Lord. Every truly humble and benevolent heart, feels relieved from the darkness and despondency of mind which arise from a view of the immense flood of evils occasioned by the fall of man. In a view of the universality of God's decrees, and the execution of them all, by the agency of his wise and holy providence, benevolence is satisfied. Every humble heart is satisfied and comforted. Satan is confounded, fallen man is reprov'd and humbled; and the glorious scheme of redemption is revealed. The Lord alone is exalted, and his enemies are found liars. Ultimately, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent...*
 AMEN.



ESSAY XII.

Total Depravity.

HAVING, in the preceding Essay, considered the temptation and fall of our first parents; we now proceed to an investigation of their subsequent character and state. That a very great change took place, in consequence of their apostasy and rebellion against God, all must acknowledge. But how great this change was, is a subject of much dispute. By many it is contended, that by the fall, man but partly lost the moral image of God; and that all his posterity have sustained the same mixed character; being deeply corrupted in heart, being partly, but not totally depraved. Others maintain the opinion, that the immediate, and the abiding consequence of the first transgression, was total sinfulness and depravity of heart. This is the opinion now to be vindicated, as a branch of the system of divine truth.

Whether it was a matter of necessity, in the nature of the case, that if man sinned at all, he should sin with all his heart; we are not informed. But supposing it had been possible, that he should apostatize only in part, retaining still a measure of real virtue and holiness; yet this was not the case in fact. In his first transgression, his whole heart was evidently involved in sin, and disaffection to his God. This was his appearance, when he was called to an account for his transgression. He had foolishly attempted to hide himself from the presence of the Lord, among the trees of the garden; and to conceal the shame of his nakedness, by a garment of fig leaves. These were strong indications of total depravity. And when he actually appeared before his God, and was interrogated by him, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?" he tacitly acknowledged the fact; but made no retraction. He was full of shame and guilt; but, to exculpate himself, he indirectly cast the blame on God himself. "The woman whom *thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Is it possible, that any degree of depravity, short of that which is total, could produce such insolence as this? Christians, who are but partly sanctified, take all the blame of their transgressions to themselves. But Adam and Eve offered to God their apologies; which proves that they were totally destitute of holiness.

It is further evident, from God's threatening to our first parents, "Thou shalt surely die," that their fall was total. This death we have found to mean eternal death; or eternal misery, in the region of devils and damned spirits. Now if their apostasy had been but partial; and if they had still retained a good degree of virtue, and holiness of heart; surely, they were not prepared, by their first transgression, for that death which was threatened. They were, by no means, prepared to be the companions of devils and damned spirits, for ever. This threatening was not indeed executed, in the day of Adam's fall, but a reprieve was granted, and pardon was granted to the truly penitent, only through the mediation and atonement of the divine Redeemer; which plan of divine mercy was immediately after the fall, revealed to our first parents; and in this way, the divine threatening was established and vindicated, by the blood of Christ;

and redemption was purchased for all who embraced the Saviour. Adam and Eve doubtless embraced the Saviour, and the plan of redemption by his blood. For they immediately commenced religious sacrifices, and appeared, thereafter, to enjoy the favour of God. But this whole scheme of redemption by the blood of Christ, is grounded on the doctrine of the total depravity of our first parents. By this plan, the whole law of God, with all its threatenings was established, magnified, and made honourable. And "Christ hath redeemed" Adam and Eve, and all other penitent sinners; "from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for them.*" All this implies the total depravity of mankind.

But, whether our first parents, in their apostasy from God, were totally involved in sin or not; yet it is abundantly evident, that this was the character, and still continues to be the character, of all their posterity. The first divine testimony on this point, was pronounced long before the flood. "God saw, that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and, that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is added in the connection, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;" or *infancy*. These are very strong expressions of the total, and even universal depravity of the human heart. Lest any man should imagine, that depravity is chiefly limited to the heathen; and that the Jewish and Christian nations have been in a good measure free from the contagion; the Apostle Paul, by a most thorough investigation, proved, that both Jews and Gentiles, meaning the whole human race, in their natural state, are *all under sin*. And this he proved from the old testament, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." This is a very full and decisive testimony of the total depravity of all mankind.

The fear of the Lord is said to be the *beginning of wisdom*, or of true religion. Being destitute of this, therefore, is being destitute of the first principle of true religion. This constitutes total depravity of heart. The testimonies of Paul, and the other inspired writers on this point, are very numerous and explicit. A perfect contrast is drawn between the carnally minded, and the spiritually minded. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." If they cannot please God at all, it must be because they are destitute of holiness; for, with all their imperfections, it is certain, that real Christians do so live and walk as to please God. Again; sinners are represented as in a state of moral death. "And you hath he quickened," said Paul to the saints at Ephesus, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." Likewise says the Saviour, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." This is a resurrection from spiritual death, and is the same as regeneration. Christ in his ministry, and especially in his reproof of his opposers, taught the doctrine of total depravity, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye receive not." Had natural men a spark of holiness, they would certainly receive the blessed Saviour with joy. If all men have a principle of love to God in their hearts, how is it possible to account for the most outrageous persecution and murder of the Lord of glory. How can we account for the rise and reign of Antichrist? and for the horrid and unprovoked martyrdom of millions of the meek and amiable followers of Jesus Christ? How could the time ever come, in the Christian era, when whosoever killed the Apostles and followers of Christ, *should think he did God service*? Could any thing short of total depravity, produce such awful and horrid effects as these? Certainly nothing.

Again; From the necessity of regeneration, we clearly infer the doctrine of total depravity. "Except a man be born again," says the Saviour, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." But elsewhere he teaches distinctly and

abundantly, that every one who possessed and expressed the smallest token of love to him, should be saved. He that should give a cup of cold water to a disciple only, because he belonged to him, should in no wise lose his reward. And every one who should forsake houses or brethren or sisters—that is to say, who should manifest the least degree of self-denial for his sake, “should receive an hundred fold in this present world, and in the world to come, life everlasting.” The inference is plain and obvious, that in order to possess the least degree of love to Christ, or the least degree of holiness, a man must be born again. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” Man, therefore, as he is originally born, is wholly carnal, and sinful. “I know, that *in me*, that is, in my flesh, *dwelleth no good thing.*” Every man, in his natural state, as he proceeds from the first parents of our race, is alienated from God, totally corrupt, and spiritually dead. “When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”

As to the *state and condition* of mankind, in consequence of their apostasy from God, it is beyond conception woful. It is a state of guilt and condemnation, a state of sorrow and distress. “The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery.” “All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell for ever.” Thus woful is the state and condition of the human race, in consequence of the universal reign of sin. Sin hath, indeed, *reigned unto death.* “The wages of sin is death.” Had there been no revelation of divine grace, in favour of lost man, his condition must, immediately, have been as hopeless as that of the fallen angels. For he was equally involved in guilt; and was without excuse. He could make no atonement for one of his transgressions, nor could he be persuaded, by all possible motives, to forsake his sins, even if by so doing he could inherit eternal life. Woful is the character and condition of fallen man!

ESSAY XIII.

Original Sin.

CONNECTED with the doctrine of the total depravity of our first parents, even in their first transgression; and of the total depravity of all their posterity; we are now to consider the particular doctrine of *original sin*. Respecting this doctrine, we meet with some diversity of opinion, even among those who admit the total and universal depravity of man. Some have entertained the absurd and antisciptural idea, that all the posterity of Adam are somehow made guilty of his first sin—that *they sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression*—that, if there was not a *transfer* of the personal act of eating the forbidden fruit; yet there was a transfer of the guilt that he incurred by that act. This however, does not seem to comport with scripture nor common sense. The plain testimony of scripture is, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” Such is also the language of reason and common sense. Personal acts, and moral character are not transferable from one to another. Neither the sin nor the righteousness of one can become the sin or the righteousness of another.

Again; Others have supposed, that but one single sin can properly be called original sin; and that is the sin of our first parents, in eating the forbidden fruit. This is said to be, literally and strictly speaking, *the original transgression*; and the fruitful source of all subsequent sins and abominations. It is indeed true, that eating the forbidden fruit was the first and original sin of the human race; and, according to the divine constitution, rather than by any necessity in the nature of the case, this first sin of Adam involved his posterity in a state of sin and ruin. “Through the offence of one, many are dead;” yea, all are dead in trespasses and sins. Adam was doubtless placed as a public head, or representative of all his posterity; so that the fate of the whole was suspended on his conduct. Probably he was apprised of his high responsibility; and had placed before him the greatest and

most powerful motives to obedience, and perseverance, even to the end of his special probation. "By constituting Adam the public head of his posterity," says an eminent writer, "God suspended their holiness and sinfulness upon his conduct. So that his holiness would; *constitutionally*, render them holy; and his sinfulness would, *constitutionally*, render them unholy, or depraved." Accordingly it is written, "By one man's disobedience, many were made, or *constituted*, sinners. The word, *made*, ought to have been translated, *constituted*. And, in the present view of the subject, original sin consisted in Adam's first sin. This was the bitter root, from whence have proceeded the sin and depravity of the whole family of man. On this point there ought to be no controversy; nor the least diversity of opinion.

But there is another view of this very interesting subject, which equally claims our attention. We find, that many writers on what is called *original sin*, and perhaps the greater part of orthodox Christians hold, that original sin consists in *that sinfulness and depravity of nature*, which constitute the original character and condition of all the posterity of fallen Adam. "By *original sin*," says President Edwards, "as the phrase has been most commonly used by divines, is meant *the innate sinful depravity of the heart*." "The corruption of the whole nature," say the assembly of divines, "is commonly called *original sin*." If the *innate, sinful depravity of the heart*, according to President Edwards, or *the corruption of the whole nature*, according to the assembly of divines, implies, in particular, that this is the character of mankind, from their infancy, and even from the very moment, when they first breathe the breath of life, and commence a moral existence; then we fully concur with them in opinion. The definitions are correct. The commencement of *innate sinfulness of heart*, or of the *corruption of the whole nature*, being from the first dawn of existence, renders it proper to call this sinful state of mankind *original sin*. The state of Adam's posterity is different however, from his own state, as respects original sin. Adam's original was holy; but, respecting his posterity, it is declared justly and emphatically, by the Poet,

"All their original is shame,
"And all their nature sin."

This, whether it be most properly termed original sin or not, is the very point, which is before us ; and which is now to be proved.

1. That all mankind are, in fact, and from their birth, possessed of a sinful nature and character, in consequence of the apostasy, is evident from various passages of scripture. It is said plainly, that "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Not meaning that they literally *speaking*, as soon as they are born ; but that their innate, original character is of the nature of falsehood. As soon as they are able to speak intelligently, they are given to lying and deceit. That this is inherent in their very nature, appears from the next words : "Their poison is as the poison of a serpent." Whether we are to suppose, that sinfulness is propagated from father to son, by natural generation, or not, is unessential, in the present argument. This probably, is not the case. For if it were so, in the nature of things ; then christians would propagate christians ; which does not appear from scripture, nor from observation. By the strong expressions, "*Their poison is as the poison of a serpent,*" is doubtless meant, that, in consequence of the fall of Adam, all his posterity are as inevitably corrupt in their original, as that, in consequence of the poison of the serpent, all his posterity are in their original, poisonous. *By a divine constitution*, Adam begat a son in his own *sinful* likeness. Such have been all the sons and daughters of the human race. All have, from their birth, in a moral sense, *borne the image of the earthy*. They have been sinful and mortal, even from the commencement of their existence ; and this, on no other ground, but that of the apostasy of Adam and Eve. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned.*" Death is declared to be the wages of sin. So far as death reigns, among moral beings, therefore, we may be assured that sin also reigns. "But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." For Adam's sake, they were born in sin ; and of course, were made subject to death. The Psalmist, more than once, expresses the idea of his own original depravity. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Strongly to express the infallible connection between the transgression of the first parents, and the native corruption of all their posterity, it is represented in the book of Job, as a *natural and necessary connection*. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. How can he be clean, who is born of a woman?”

The doctrine of the original, innate depravity of the heart, which commences with the very existence of the soul, and grows with its growth; is, to our scanty view, a mysterious doctrine. But being clearly taught in the scriptures, it is to be embraced, as an important article of our faith; and a peculiar trial of our confidence in God.

2. The doctrine of original sin, being very interesting and trying to the feelings of many, and especially to the feelings of the parents of an infant offspring; it is proper to pursue still further the evidence of this solemn truth. The next argument may be this, That, salvation being by Christ alone, implies, that all, who are saved, have been, previously, in a state of sin and condemnation. That infants may be the happy subjects of grace and salvation, all will grant. But Christ came to seek and to save only those who were lost. The inference is plain, that infants, as well as others, are in a lost and perishing condition, through the original and innate depravity of their hearts. If this be not the case with them, then to them Christ is dead in vain. Nor need we ask or look for the salvation of our dying infants, through the atoning blood of Christ.

3. The ordinance of circumcision anciently, and the ordinance of baptism at the present time, being applied to infants, clearly show that infants have sinful corruptions and lusts to be cut off, according to the import of circumcision; and to be cleansed, according to the import of baptism. With regard to all divine ordinances, which are significant of salvation by grace, infants and adults stand on the same general ground. All hope arises from the merits of a crucified Saviour. All are therefore sinful and condemned, as soon as they are born.

4. The universal sinfulness of infants, which is manifested in their first moral actions, proves incontestibly, that there is in them a native, and original propensity of mind to evil. A peevish, selfish, froward, perverse spirit, appears to be as natural to fallen mankind as their

breath. “Foolishness,” which in the scripture sense, is wickedness, “is bound up in the heart of a child,” says Solomon; and the sad necessity of an abundant use of the rod of correction, is a conclusive evidence of original corruption of nature. That so much correction and punishment are necessary in childhood, manifests a corrupt original.

5. When it is said, “Man is born to trouble,” it clearly implies, that he is born in sin. And from his birth, his trouble commences. The pains and anguish of infants are often exquisitely severe and poignant. Death arrests the tender babe, more frequently than people of any other age. What a multitude of infants were overwhelmed in the flood, and perished in Sodom, and in Canaan, and in Jerusalem, when they were destroyed! Now therefore, unless God was in the practice of destroying the righteous with the wicked, who can account for these awful events of his providence? Who can satisfy his mind, in view of the universal reign of death, on any other ground but this, that “Sin hath reigned unto death?” and that death extends, among rational beings and moral agents, no farther than sin extends.

6. The distinction between the natural birth, and the spiritual birth, clearly teaches original depravity. The natural man, is man in his original state. And, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.” A man becomes spiritually minded, by regeneration. Till this new birth, there is not the least particle of spiritual life; but strong symptoms of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. This is enough to convince every candid mind, of the doctrine of original depravity. “He that is born of God, sinneth not.” But till this blessed change takes place, sin is reigning triumphantly.

REMARKS.

1. Notwithstanding the universal and original apostasy of man was *by the offence of one*, who is the father of us all; yet the sin of every individual is as really *his own sin*, as if it were self-originated. “By one man’s diso-

bedience, many were *made sinners*." They were not made, or constituted sufferers for the sin of another. This would have been an act of flagrant injustice and cruelty. But, in consequence of the sin of Adam, when he was constituted the head and representative of all his posterity, mankind became *sinner*s: and if sinners, in their own personal exercises and actions; then certainly, they became the proper subjects of punishment. For "the wages of sin is death," whether sin comes by Adam's fall, or by any other means. Wherever sin exists, there blame and punishment exist.

2. Still men hold fast the objection; "If we inherit a sinful nature from our first parents; if Adam is responsible for the universal apostasy of mankind; how can we be the proper subjects of blame and punishment?" By way of reply, let us turn the tables. Those who are the spiritual seed of Christ, *the second Adam*, do not make themselves righteous. He has, and he will have, an innumerable seed to serve him. But it is only through the atoning blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, that he has one soul to serve him. All that are righteous, in the gospel sense, are, by the power of divine grace, *made righteous*. They are *made willing*, in the day of Christ's power. How then can they be the proper subjects of praise, and divine approbation, and reward? The Apostle commends and praises the faithful followers of Christ, though he considers them as being *made* righteous, for Christ's sake alone; and by the power of the Holy Spirit. If we look back to the day of man's creation, we find, that God *made him upright*. If so, how could he be commendable for his uprightness? If no blame can be attached to sinners, merely because they became such, through the apostasy of their federal head; then of course, and by just consequence, no praise can be attached to the saints, because they are made such through the infinite merit of Christ, who is their federal head. The case is perfectly clear; and together with what has been said, in other parts of the system, on this great point, it is thought to be sufficiently elucidated. As a summary, it may now be stated, that virtue or vice, praise or blame belong to all who are found in the exercise of moral liberty and agency. Whatever may have been the cause, or means of virtue, affects neither its nature, nor its desert of praise. And

whatever may have been the cause, or means of vice, as little affects its nature or deserts. Wherever virtue is discovered, it is immediately approved; and wherever vice is discovered, it is immediately condemned. This is agreeable to scripture and common sense: and in this view, every conscience, and every heart ought to be reconciled to the solemn doctrine of original sin.



ESSAY XIV.

Redemption.

HAVING dilated as far as is thought expedient, on the solemn and awful subjects of the apostasy, depravity, and original corruption of all mankind; we now proceed to a more pleasant theme—a *gospel doctrine*. The subject of this Essay may be the doctrine of *redemption, by the blood of Christ*. This is a subject which claims the most lively, ardent and grateful attention. The gospel and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, are the things “which the angels desire to look into.” And if all that appertains to the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ, be exhibited; it will amount to an exhibition of the whole gospel of divine grace.

Introductory to a discussion of this doctrine, we may notice, that from the scriptures, there appears to have been an eternal covenant between the persons of the sacred Trinity, called *the covenant of redemption*. This covenant is clearly manifested by its effects. The several parts performed by each of the three persons of the Godhead, suggest the idea of an eternal compact, or agreement, as respected the marvellous work of redemption. The great objects to be accomplished, and which have employed the counsels of the *Three in One*, from eternity, were, to provide an adequate atonement for sin, and an actual deliverance of the elect from the curse of the divine law. For this purpose, the Father is represented, as sitting on the throne of justice, claiming satisfaction for the violation of his law, and finding a ransom; and as giving to his Son the promise of a seed to serve him for a reward of his sufferings as a Mediator. The Father also, “sent

forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." God gave his only begotten Son, and *delivered him up for us all*. The Son, on his part, freely undertook the arduous work. "Lo I come! in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God; and thy law is within my heart." Cheerfully did he engage to assume our nature; and lay down his life for us. All this being insufficient to win the hearts of sinners, an important work was also assigned to the Holy Ghost. To him it belonged, not only to guide and comfort all the saints, and keep them, by his power, through faith unto salvation; but also to reprove *the world* of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. His was also the great and glorious work of regeneration. "According to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The wonderful order and arrangement of the great works appertaining to redemption, make it evident, that they are, and have been, *covenant transactions* of the sacred Trinity, established from eternity.

There are several passages of scripture, which, in a general view, evidently allude to the covenant of redemption. Particularly in the 89th Psalm; the things which are said of David, have more particular reference to the Saviour, of whom David was an illustrious type. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David, my servant; thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him. Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." These high honours belong to him only, who is the Prince of peace; and they are the fruits and rewards of his faithfulness in the character of a Mediator.

Much we find also which relates to the covenant of redemption, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah's prophecy. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.—The Lord

hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief.” Thus the blessed Redeemer performed and suffered his stipulated part, and waited for his reward. “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall *see his seed*; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” In this chapter, we have many clear and strong expressions of covenant transactions between the persons of the adorable Trinity; and especially, between the Father and the Son. The work of the Holy Spirit is always understood, whether expressed or not, so far as respects the actual redemption to God of all the subjects of divine grace. A similar statement, respecting the covenant of redemption, we have in the epistle to the Colossians. Describing the voluntary humiliation of Christ, from the highest seat in heaven, to the ignominious death of the cross, to make an ample atonement for a guilty world; it is added, as expressive of his stipulated reward; “God also,” even God the Father, “hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess, that he is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.”

Thus, by way of covenant, and mutual compact, the great and glorious work of redemption has been accomplished by the sacred Trinity; and the precious fruits of this work of grace are manifest, and will be more and more manifest, while the world stands; and the glorious work will be celebrated in heaven by unceasing praises and hallelujahs.

These are the views which Christians generally entertain of the covenant of redemption. In this, man has no part to act, no condition to perform. The whole of this great and wonderful transaction, is accomplished by the Godhead; by which it appears, that all are equally engaged to accomplish the arduous and glorious work of redemption; and all derive from it equal honour and glory.

REMARKS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. It appears from the view which we have taken of the covenant of redemption, that however united and harmonious the persons of the Godhead might be, in the execution of this glorious work, yet Christ is more particularly than the others, the Redeemer of sinful men. "The only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ." Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. "Christ hath redeemed us to God, by his own blood." Christ, only, assumed human nature, and was made capable of pain, and sorrow, and death. Considering the infinite dignity of his character, as "God manifest in the flesh," he was capable, by his own voluntary sufferings and death, of making an infinite atonement for sin. And to him it belonged, according to the tenor of the covenant of redemption, to suffer, in sinners' stead, *all that they deserved*: not that he suffered, literally speaking, all the pains and sorrows, due to sinners. For, as the human nature only, was capable of suffering; it was impossible for Christ to suffer an infinite quantity of pain or sorrow. But taking into the account the infinite dignity of his character, it is evident, that what he suffered was as well fitted to express the displeasure of God against sin, as if Deity himself had suffered on the cross, in man's stead. Accordingly, in a free mode of expression, the life and the blood of Christ are spoke of as the life and the blood of God. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he, (God) laid down his life for us." "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with *his own blood*."

Thus the law of God, sanctioned by a penalty, absolutely infinite, was amply vindicated, fulfilled, *magnified, and made honourable*. This was the arduous part which Christ performed, in distinction from the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, all that was arduous and painful, was sustained by Christ. In this respect, Christ is, by way of distinction and eminence, denominated the REDEEMER. Should any conceive it to have been a hardship for the Saviour to sustain all the sorrows and sufferings due to an ungodly world; let them consider, that as great as his sufferings were, so great also is his reward. His humiliation and death are attended with an infinite re-

ward. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." He is exalted to be head over all things to the church. To him is given the dominion over all the principalities and powers of this world. He ever has and ever will have a seed to serve him in this world; and the time is drawing near, when his kingdom shall break in pieces and destroy the empires of iniquity, and then shall all the earth be filled with his glory.

2. In the discussion of the doctrine of the redemption of sinners, we may notice, that it differs materially from the redemption of slaves and captives. Such may be redeemed with money, or be exchanged for others in a like state of bondage with themselves. For they are considered as being free from criminality; though lawful captives. But in the case of sinners, money is out of the question. All the gold of Ophir would be of no avail, to redeem the soul from spiritual bondage. To offer money for the redemption of a convict, under the wholesome laws of human government, would be deemed an insult to the government. To offer money for the redemption of offenders in the christian church, would be an insult to the body of Christ.

Redemption, in the bible sense, is effected, only by the atonement, which was made by the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." All mankind, having by their transgression, fallen under the sentence of eternal death, and being unable to deliver and save themselves, unable to atone for their sins, or to render that honour to the divine law, which justice demands; the way was prepared for Christ to interpose, according to the covenant of redemption, and give up his infinitely precious life for sinners, which was an all-sufficient sacrifice. This was a sacrifice acceptable to God; and this removed every obstacle, and every insuperable difficulty, in obtaining salvation. Now the door of mercy was opened, and nothing was required, but barely to accede to the humiliating terms of forgiveness, through the atoning blood of the Redeemer; and to embrace him by that faith, which works by love. Propitiation was made for the sins of the whole world. Christ *tasted death for every man*. The atonement was infinite and unlimited,

however limited the application of it may be, in the actual redemption of souls from the bondage of sin and death, by the power of the Holy Ghost. To lay an ample foundation for the pardon and salvation of all penitent sinners, by suffering, in their stead, the curse of a broken law ; was the nature, as well as the design of the atonement. The suffering was, strictly speaking, vicarious—*one for others*—“the just for the unjust.” “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Thus we discover the nature and design of the great work of redemption by the blood of the Son of God ; and how different it is from the redemption of slaves and captives.

3. We may notice, more particularly, the necessity of redemption by the blood of Christ. “For if there had been a law, which could have given life, verily righteousness,” or rather *justification*, “should have been by the law.” But no such law can be found. Nothing can be done by sinners, which will give them a title to salvation. “God will by no means clear the guilty,” on the ground of their own works. Accordingly, sinners are said to be in a lost state. Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost. When man had fallen under the curse, there was but one alternative, either an infinite sacrifice must be offered, or else eternal death must be the portion of all mankind. Thus we see, that redemption by Christ’s blood was absolutely necessary to the salvation of sinners.

4. Great as the work of redemption is, and all-sufficient as the atonement is ; yet these afford no security for the salvation of a single sinner. What could the atonement avail a guilty world, were no man found willing to receive it ? Superficial minds infer, from the sufficiency of the atonement, that all men will be saved. With as much propriety it might be said, that the atonement is sufficient to rid this world of evils ; therefore this world will be rid of evils. Or that the atonement is sufficient for the salvation of the devils, therefore the devils will be saved. But the fact is, “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” The dreadful consequences of the apostasy are not removed ; and mankind are not saved, by the mere sufferings of Christ. The atonement, in itself considered, saves no man *from* his sins ; and no

man can be saved *in* his sins. Of course, the salvation of no man is secured by the atonement.

By the blood of Christ, the law of God is vindicated, and is most powerfully enforced. Of course, the certainty of the damnation of all the impenitent is established. The work of redemption, instead of leading us presumptuously to hope for salvation, at all events, should alarm us with a sense of sin and danger. For as great as the atonement is, so great is our guilt; and if we continue in sin, so great will be our final condemnation. How extremely hazardous is it, therefore, to persevere in sin, hoping for salvation, on the ground of full redemption, by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ! This is a groundless and fallacious hope.

5. From this discussion of the doctrine of redemption, and from the scriptures in general on this subject, we learn, that all mankind are the subjects of atonement though not of salvation, by the blood of Christ. None but the elect are actually redeemed from the bondage of sin and death, and brought home to God, by faith in Jesus Christ.

The ransom is indeed fully paid for all men; and all are equally invited to participate in its benefits. Christ is said to have given himself *a ransom for all*. "And he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." "Christ died for all;" and hereby proved, not that all should be saved; but that *all were dead*. "And he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." All the instruction given us in the holy scriptures, on the subject of redemption, conveys the idea, that the ransom is paid for all. The prison doors are open to all! and on this ground, all are invited to come forth out of their spiritual bondage, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Thus an ample foundation is laid for the actual salvation of all mankind, would they but only humble themselves, and heartily comply with the precious offers and invitations of the gospel. These, without reserve, are addressed to all men. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." "Incline your ear, therefore, and come; hear, and your soul shall live." "And the

spirit, and the bride say, come." All mankind, both bad and good, if they ever come within the hearing of the gospel, are invited to the marriage feast. Surely these invitations and promises do not at all comport with the doctrine of a *limited atonement, and limited redemption*. The invitations and promises are evidently addressed both to the elect, and to the non-elect. They were addressed to the Jews, when it was evident that many of them were of the non-elect; and to the Gentiles universally. Nor is there a word in the holy scriptures, expressing the idea of a limited atonement, limited redemption, or limited offers, invitations, or promises. By the great plan of redemption, the door of mercy is set open equally, to all mankind. Not that any man, saint or sinner, has the least claim to divine favour, as a matter of justice, or a reward of merit. He can claim no part of Christ's righteousness, to support a plea in his own favour. For the righteousness of Christ is not transferable to another. All his hope is in the infinite merit of the *blood of Christ*; and in the riches of divine grace.

6. From the view which we have taken of the doctrine of redemption, it is evident that it is effected, not by the obedience, but by the *sufferings* of Christ. All the expressions of the atonement, which have been noticed in the discussion of the doctrine before us, are expressions of suffering, rather than of obedience; and it has clearly appeared, that sufferings correspond with the curse of the law; and are necessary to the proper execution of the curse, or penalty of the law. It was by suffering on the cross, and not by obedience to the moral law, that *Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree; died for the ungodly, suffered for us, was made sin for us; was wounded for our transgressions; redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*

Besides; It is to be noticed distinctly, that in the redemption of sinners, by the blood of Christ, there is an infinite *sacrifice* for sin. Christ is said to have made his soul an offering for sin; and to have put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." But is there any sacrifice in mere acts of obedience? Is not obedience to God the supreme delight of all rational creatures, who are, as Christ was, in a state of perfect holiness? Surely, there must be something more humiliating, and more arduous, than mere

obedience to the moral law of God, to constitute an atonement for sin, and to deliver us from the curse of a broken law.

We may observe further, as an evidence, that the atonement is effected, not by the obedience, but by the sufferings of Christ; that all the types of the atonement, under the old testament dispensation, consisted in bloody sacrifices, and offerings for sin: "And without shedding of blood, there is no remission." The paschal lamb, a type of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, was to be slain and roasted and eaten; and as a special type of the manner of Christ's death, not a bone was to be broken. And it is said, that "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burnt without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." The typical priesthood, and every thing typical of Christ, in the Mosaic system, lead us to consider the atonement, as consisting, *wholly*, in the sufferings and death of Christ.

The obedience of Christ, in his human nature, was indeed perfect. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled." Had he not been obedient, he could never have been disposed to lay down his life for us; neither would his death have been at all meritorious. It is said *he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* His death was doubtless voluntary, and *to this* he became obedient, *because, in this consisted the atonement.*

Such is the doctrine of redemption; a doctrine which angels, as well as men, may justly admire and celebrate. It is a glorious manifestation of the love and mercy of the sacred Trinity. And now unto the Three that bear record in heaven, be honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise for ever.....AMEN.



ESSAY XV.

Regeneration.

HAVING found, by attending to the glorious doctrine of redemption, that an infinite atonement is made for the sins of the whole world, by the sufferings and death of the

Son of God ; and that the offers and invitations of the gospel are freely presented to all men ; it might seem reasonable to expect, that perishing sinners would flock to the standard of the cross ; and that, as far as the name and work of the Redeemer should be known, they would readily accede to his gracious proposals. But alas ! “ All with one consent begin to make excuse.” No sinner is found willing to comply with the most gracious terms of salvation.

Sinners are not only invited and intreated ; but they are most solemnly commanded, on pain of an aggravated damnation, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; and it is declared, that “ he that believeth not, is condemned already ;” and that “ the wrath of God abideth on him.” But invitations, promises and threatenings are found to be altogether ineffectual. Said Christ to sinners, “ Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.”

Do any inquire how this can possibly be the case ? Let them only recollect what has been said in some of the foregoing Essays, on the subjects of human depravity, and original sin. In the discussion of these subjects, we have found abundant evidence of the total sinfulness, and native depravity of the whole human race. This being the character of fallen man, it is rational to conclude, that no one, in a state of nature, can be disposed to embrace the offers of salvation by the divine Redeemer. Since all men have, from their nativity, a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be ; how can they yield submission, or even feel reconciled to that plan of redemption, by which the law, that they hate and oppose, is magnified and made honourable ? It is easily seen, therefore, why it is, that no man, in a state of nature, is willing to come unto Christ, that he may have life. It is easily seen, that the same proud and carnal heart, which opposes the divine law, must equally oppose the gospel of divine grace. So malignant is the opposition of every heart to the plan of salvation by a Redeemer, that nothing short of a special display of divine power, can overcome it. Had there been in the covenant of redemption, no part assigned to the Holy Spirit ; had it not been his office-work to renew the hearts of sinners, and make them, the willing subjects of Christ's kingdom ; the whole work

and suffering of Christ must have been fruitless, notwithstanding their all-sufficiency.

Thus we see at one view, both the nature and necessity of regeneration. These, however, will be further considered separately.

1. As to the *nature* of regeneration, or that in which it consists, it is a change of the heart of sinners, from the love of sin to the love of holiness. Or, if any choose to consider it as a removal of the old heart, and the creation of a new heart; to this there is no objection. The difference is but verbal. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The figure here made use of, conveys the idea of an exchange of a bad for a good heart,—of a hard for a tender heart. Regeneration is sometimes expressed by one similitude, and sometimes by another. Sometimes by creation. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." "Created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Sometimes by the resurrection of the dead. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." But more especially, and appropriately, is it represented by the figure of a birth. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed." "Being begotten again, unto a lively hope." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Regeneration is also represented as a washing, or purification. It is called "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Some call it the implantation of a holy principle, temper, or disposition, in the once totally corrupt and depraved heart. To this there is no objection; and perhaps this is the best definition; because it conveys the idea, distinctly, that it is not an entire, but a partial renovation of the heart.

Such being the nature of regeneration, it is proper, to consider in this connection, by whose agency this great work is effected. And, from a view of the greatness of the work, as well as from a view of the awfully corrupt and depraved state of the human heart, which is the subject of regeneration; it is evident, that *this is the work of God*. Accordingly it is written, that *the sons of God were born*, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of

the will of man, *but of God.*" "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." "According to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." When it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" the meaning is, that the word of truth is *instrumental* of this great change. But it is not an instrument by which sinners produce this change in their own hearts; for (note well the expressions) "Of his own will, *begat he us.*" God does indeed employ the holy scriptures, and a preached gospel, and many other means, to awaken the conscience, enlighten the understanding, and furnish, and present to the mind the proper objects of right affection. But let sinners bear in mind, that means and instruments are in the hands of God: By him they are used to good purpose. But sinners have no more relish for the means of grace, than for grace itself.

Thus, as respects regeneration, and sanctification, and every Christian grace, "All things are of God."

2. The *necessity* of regeneration, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is strongly and repeatedly expressed in the scriptures; and we have already discovered, in part, the ground of this necessity. The scriptures are emphatical, "Ye must be born again." "The natural man," who is born only of the flesh, "is *flesh*; he is carnally minded, which is death. He receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In the new birth, the Spirit of Christ is imbibed: "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of God, he is none of his."

The *necessity* of regeneration very clearly results from the total and innate depravity of every natural heart. This ground of the necessity of regeneration has been already suggested; but it ought to be most clearly understood. The necessity of regeneration does not arise, as some suppose, from a *natural inability* to embrace the offers of the gospel. The scriptures admit of no such inability to perform any one of the divine commands. Although they are clear in the idea of absolute dependence on God, for regeneration, "A new heart will I give you,

and a new spirit will I put within you ;” yet they are equally clear, in requiring sinners to make themselves a new heart, and a new spirit. “ Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” Surely, there can be no natural inability, no insuperable difficulty, in sinners casting away their transgressions, and becoming reconciled in heart to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. All the difficulty, in this case, exists only in the heart, or will ; and it does not in the least degree, impair the natural powers and faculties of the mind ; nor render the power of God necessary in the nature of things to change the heart. Were sinners only disposed in heart to turn to God, by true repentance ; and to embrace the Saviour, by a living faith ; where would be the necessity of regeneration ? But, most certainly, sinners ought to be thus disposed ; and, according to the plain requirement, to “ make them a new heart, and a new spirit.”

There is, however, another kind of inability, if it be proper to call it so, which is the sole ground of the necessity of regeneration. This is what is called a *moral inability*. It exists only in the heart ; and consists in a strenuous and fixed opposition to the divine requirements. So great and strong is this opposition to the law and government, and even the grace of God, that all means and moral suasions are fruitless. The more sinners are invited, intreated and commanded to return to God, by true repentance ; the more they are hardened in sin unless prevented by sovereign grace. Thus it appears, that although the door of mercy is open, and sinners are invited into Christ’s kingdom : yet they all, with one consent refuse ; and refuse they will, if left to themselves, till they die without hope. Their moral inability, though entirely different in its nature from that which is natural, will effectually prevent their salvation ; unless God, by his Holy Spirit, makes them willing, in the day of his power. O how inexcusable must sinners appear, when nothing but their own voluntary wickedness, renders the great work of regeneration necessary to their salvation !

Respecting the doctrine of regeneration, we may further observe, that it is an *instantaneous* change of heart. There has been no point of time, when those who have become

the subjects of regeneration, were neither saints nor sinners. As the resurrection of the dead, at the last day, will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so is this spiritual resurrection. Regeneration, when completed, is but a partial change of heart. If this therefore, were a gradual work, who could be able to judge when the degrees of it amounted to a saving change? If regeneration be any thing new, it must be produced instantaneously.

We may notice further,

It is a work imperceptible at the moment, and realized only by its effects. "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit." As Adam could realize nothing of his own creation, till he found himself completely in existence; so it is in the spiritual creation, or regeneration. Of course, man cannot be supposed to perform any part, in the glorious work; nor is there, strictly speaking, any agency whatever, co-operating with the divine agency, in producing the new heart. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new: And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

Regarding, however, the distinction between common grace, and special grace, we may notice many effects of divine influence and divine restraints, which fall far short of producing a new heart. Men often appear externally, and through the influence of what is called common grace, to be *almost Christians*. And this common grace has, in its nature, a strong tendency to bring about a renovation of the heart. Still, without special grace, it is utterly ineffectual.

We observe further; God usually takes certain measures with those whom he is about to regenerate, which are, in some respects, preparatory to this glorious work. He calls their attention to the reading and ministry of the word; or arrests their attention by special providences: He sends the arrows of conviction into their consciences, and leads them to a sense of their awful sin and danger. All these fall short of special, regenerating grace; but without these preparatives, we rarely hear of an instance of regeneration. On the day of Pentecost, there was

powerful preaching ; miracles also were wrought, and the most agonizing conviction of sin was felt, particular instruction was given to multitudes, who cried out in the assembly, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" All these things took place, before there was a symptom of regeneration. Afterwards, when their minds were prepared to appreciate the grace of God, and to obtain a more clear understanding of the things of Christ's kingdom ; three thousand were found, who gladly received the word, and were baptized. This is a lively specimen of the manner, in which God usually calls in his elect, by regenerating grace. We here observe the same mode of divine proceeding, which has been observed in all the subsequent displays of regenerating grace. This was the method taken with Paul, in the process of his conviction and conversion. He was slain by the law, and cried out in agony of soul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" After this, he was regenerated. The instances here mentioned correspond with the promises of Christ to his disciples, to send them the Comforter, who should guide them into all the truth. It is added, "And when he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment." Such is the method, and such are the means, by which God carries on his work of regenerating grace. But we are to remember, the means are in the hand of the Lord, and not of men.

We further observe on this subject, that regeneration is an *unconditional* work of God. By this is meant, that it is not a favour granted in consequence of any thing done as a condition, on which it had been promised. It is said expressly, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done ; but according to his mercy, of his own will, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Some suppose, that although sinners can do nothing meritorious of salvation ; yet they can pray for a new heart, and take hold of the promises ; "Ask, and it shall be given you,"—"Every one that asketh, receiveth." But is it not declared to all the unregenerate, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss?" It is absurd to suppose that regeneration is conditional, when it is, in itself, the very beginning, and foundation of all right exercises of heart, and all works of righteousness. And were it possible, that with an unre-

newed heart, mankind could perform acceptable sacrifices to God, and do works of righteousness; surely, regeneration would be needless.

Further to illustrate the doctrine, we may observe, that although it is a mighty work of God alone, to renew the depraved heart; yet the subject of this divine operation is active and voluntary. Mysterious as this statement may appear, it is plainly made by the Apostle; "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." If it be a question, therefore, whether men are active or passive in regeneration? The answer may be, that, in one sense, they are active; and in another sense, they are passive. As respects the cause of a new heart, God decides the question; "A new heart will I give you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes." But, as respects the change itself, which takes place in the moral exercises and affections of the heart, men, who are the subjects of this work of God, are constantly active. They do as actually, and voluntarily turn to the Lord, as if there were no other agency but their own employed. The distinct agency of God and man is the same in this case, as in all others, in which divine influence is said to operate on the hearts of mankind. Their hearts are also constantly active. There always is, in the sense which has been stated, a coincidence, though not strictly speaking, a co-operation of divine and human agency; but no interference of one with the other. All the exercises of our minds are alike, free and voluntary, and alike subject to the direction of the all-wise and omnipotent Jehovah. On this ground it is that we are justly required to make to ourselves a new heart, and a new spirit; to turn from all our transgressions, to repent and believe the gospel. All our affections and volitions are as entirely our own, as if we were perfectly independent. Whether therefore, we are regenerate or unregenerate, we are under all possible obligation to be holy, and faithfully to perform every duty. But, the fact is, that, left to ourselves, with the door of mercy wide open, we shall never even set a foot on the threshold. We have loved strangers; and after them we will go. To subdue the stubborn hearts of sinners, therefore, and make them sweetly accord with Christ, in the glorious scheme of re-

demption and salvation by grace ; is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. And how wonderful is the forbearance and rich grace of God, in the conversion of those who will not come unto Christ! The guilt of such is far greater than if Christ had never been revealed. Well may the Apostle consider the gift of the Holy Spirit, after Christ was rejected, as *the unspeakable gift* ; and well may those who blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, be utterly, and for ever unpardonable....AMEN.



ESSAY XVI.

The Doctrine of Election.

TO avoid the repetition of ideas and arguments contained in the preceding Essays, we may limit the present discussion chiefly to the more appropriate meaning of the word, *election*, as it relates to the choice of the subjects of grace and salvation. This view of the doctrine of election may be stated in the following definition ; That, from the whole race of sinful men, God has, according to his own most holy and eternal purpose, and for the richest display of his own glory, chosen a certain number, consisting of particular persons exclusively, to be the happy subjects of his special grace, and the heirs of eternal salvation ; giving up all the rest to final condemnation.

That this doctrine is an important article in the system of divine truth, may be argued from various considerations, some of which will be noticed.

1. It is evident from a consideration of our absolute dependence on the grace of God for salvation. If sinful men are dependent on divine grace for redemption, for regeneration, for all the christian graces, and for perseverance to life eternal ; who can imagine, that God does all these things for a certain definite number of perishing sinners, without a previous, fixed purpose or choice so to do ? Had there been no choice of God, that one should be saved rather than another, when all were absolutely dependent on him ; how is it to be accounted for, that one is taken, and another left ? One becomes a convert to Christ, and another becomes a libertine and a reprobate.

Altogether more is done for one than for another, though in similar circumstances. Says Paul to the real christian, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Whoever makes the difference, makes it by a voluntary purpose and design; and this is what we call election.

2. It may be observed, that the doctrine of God's decrees, so far as it relates to the salvation of sinners, is nearly, if not perfectly identical with the doctrine of election. For God to decree the salvation of certain individuals of the fallen race of men, is the same thing as to choose their salvation. But we have found, that the decrees of God extend to every event in the universe. Of course, the election of certain individual sinners to salvation is established. He that believes in God's infinitely wise and holy decrees, will readily believe in the doctrine of election; for it is necessarily implied in his decrees.

3. Unless we can suppose God to be *indifferent* respecting one of the greatest of all the concerns of his spiritual kingdom; indifferent respecting the number or the persons who shall be saved, and the number or the persons who shall be lost; we must concede to the doctrine of election. But who can imagine, for a moment, that God is indifferent in a case of such infinite magnitude. Paul, we find, was a "chosen, or elected vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Can any one suppose, that it was a matter of indifference in the mind of Christ, whether it should be the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, or some other man, who should do all this? There were, doubtless, many circumstances respecting this persecuting Saul, which rendered it peculiarly important, that he, rather than any other man, should be converted; and should bear the name of Jesus Christ among the gentiles, and plead his cause before the kings and potentates of the earth. In this case, there was no appearance of indifference in the mind of Christ. He had, from eternity, *made up his mind*, that Saul himself, vile as he was, should be converted, and should be the great Apostle of the gentiles. And since the conversion of sinners is, in all cases, a matter of infinite importance; and the reasons for the conversion of one, rather than another, are perfectly clear in the divine mind; surely no one can conceive, that God is indifferent, in any case whatever. Of course, he has an

election, a choice, a fixed purpose, by which the wide distinction is made among those who are equally dead in sin.

4. Another forcible argument is, that, considering the character and perfections of God, it is infinitely best, and most desirable, that he should designate the persons to be saved, and the persons to be lost. In this most interesting and important part of the divine government, we ought greatly to rejoice, rather than to murmur and repine. For we may rest assured, that *the Judge of all the earth doth right*. A wide distinction actually takes place among mankind, both as nations, and as individuals. And who would not choose, if such distinctions must exist, that they should be under the direction of an infinitely wise and holy God, rather than of mere blind chance.

But if it be infinitely best, and most desirable, that God himself should choose the objects of his favour, rather than leave the infinitely important decision to another; we may be assured that he will do it. *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.*

Finally; The most clear and satisfactory evidence of the doctrine of election, is derived from the holy scriptures. The bible most abundantly asserts this great and glorious doctrine. The Saviour speaks often, and distinctly, of the *elect*, as of a certain number, and certain individuals, who were given him by the Father, to be the subjects of special grace and salvation. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." To the Father he says in prayer; "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Speaking of false prophets who should arise, Christ says, "They shall deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect." He informed his disciples, that they were the subjects of his election. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." Christians are often denominated the elect. For by their conversion to Christ, their election is made manifest. "*Elect*, according to the foreknowledge of God the Fa-

ther." "He shall send his angels, and gather together *his elect*." "Shall not God avenge *his own elect*?" "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God's elect*?" The Apostles, also, fully confirmed the doctrine of election. When the gentiles had begun to receive the gospel, it is said, "God did visit the gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for his name." This was a *selection* of a part from the whole. To encourage Paul in his labours at Corinth, the Lord declared, "I have much people in this city." These could be God's people, only by the election of God; for, as yet, they were, for the most part, in a state of heathen idolatry. In the first epistle of Peter, the church is styled a *chosen*, or *elected* generation: and in his second epistle, they who constitute the church, are called the *elect*, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Paul, describing the woful state of the reprobate Jews, makes this exception, that "There is a remnant, according to the *election of grace*." Thus the churches and followers of Christ are often denominated the *elect*. The doctrine of election is established by a single text respecting Jacob and Esau. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, *their mother Rebekah*, "The elder shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Between these twin brothers, the Lord, by his own purpose and election, made a wide, if not an everlasting distinction.

Lest any should suppose that God's election takes place in time, and has not been from eternity; we may notice some testimonies on this head. To the Ephesians, the Apostle says, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Also, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle expresses his thankfulness to God for the brethren, beloved of the Lord, because "God had *from the beginning*, or from eternity, chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." And again; The manifold wisdom of God, displayed by the redeemed and *elected* church of Christ, is said to be "According to *the eternal purpose*, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in fact, the

immutability of God implies, that his election and purposes are all eternal, and cannot be otherwise. For, he is without variableness, or shadow of turning, "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Further to illustrate the doctrine of election, and if possible to commend it to every man's conscience, we may attend to some particular remarks.

1. The elect are not chosen to salvation, on account of any good disposition, or moral excellency which they possess; nor on account of any foreseen repentance, faith, or obedience. Election, as well as regeneration, is of free grace, and is absolutely unconditional. The subjects of election are "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," not because they are, in any measure, holy; but "that they *should be holy*, and without blame before him in love." "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" The difference that takes place between the elect and others, is the fruit and consequence, and not the ground and reason of their election. In the case of Paul, and many others, election to salvation could not be owing to any foreseen goodness. For it is abundantly evident, that, in their natural state, they were void of goodness; and that, in their renewed and converted state, their goodness was the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "By the grace of God," said Paul, "I am what I am."

The repentance, faith and obedience of the elect were indeed foreseen by the omniscient God. But they were foreseen, as the effects, and not as the cause of renewing grace; and renewing grace was foreseen as the effect of the election of God. Repentance and faith are the gift of God; and this precious gift is the fruit, and not the cause, or condition of his election. Had it not been for the election of God, and regenerating grace; never would there have been an instance of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we observe,

2. No man is elected to salvation, at all events, whether he be holy or unholy, penitent or impenitent. For it is plainly declared in the scriptures, that sinful men are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth:" "Chosen in Christ, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Do we not read, that we must "follow peace with all

men, and holiness, without which no man can see the Lord?" How great is the error and absurdity of those who say, if they are elected, they shall be saved at all events! and if not, then, at all events they shall be damned! These are rash and groundless conclusions from the doctrine of election. Why does the Apostle exhort us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure? Repentance, faith in Christ, and holy obedience to the divine requirements, which are considered as the *condition* of salvation, consist in the voluntary exercises of our own minds; and they are considered as our own acts and deeds. Without these, salvation is no where promised in the gospel. Of course, a neglect of duty cuts off the hope of salvation by the gracious election of God, and proves us to be of the non-elect.

3. By electing a part of mankind to salvation, God does no injustice to the non-elect. All have sinned, and fallen under just condemnation. And all ought to be thankful, rather than envious, that God extends his grace to *any* of the fallen race of men.

From a view of the perfections of God, and of his abundant grace, in the election and salvation of a multitude which no man can number; we may rest assured, that, were it for his own glory, and the general good, to save all mankind, all would be saved; and even the universe would be delivered from both moral and natural evil. But, as matters are, "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endureth, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" If a wise king, having granted an act of pardon to all his rebellious subjects, on condition of true penitence; and finding all still persisting in their rebellious temper, could devise a way, whereby he could melt their hearts into submission to his government; he would then be at his option, whether to melt the hearts of all, or of a part only; holding the rest as examples of vindictive wrath, and just punishment. If he can be sure to screen as many criminals, and just such individuals, from guilt and punishment, as the greatest good of his kingdom requires; does he do injustice to the rest? Is it not then a clear case, that the wise and holy election of God, by

which some are taken, and others left, is consistent with perfect justice ; and is doing no injury to the non-elect !

4. It is evident, that, in his election, God is not a respecter of persons. To despise the poor, and be partial to the rich and honourable, is to respect persons. But, in the exercise of mercy to the guilty, there is scarcely room for partiality. But, effectually to guard against the charge of partiality, "God hath," generally speaking, "chosen *the poor* of this world ; and made them rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom." In the bestowment of his grace, he has an undoubted right, if the general good require it, to make the last first, and the first last. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ?"

5. The doctrine of election is consistent with the free offers and invitations of the gospel. It has been, more than once, made manifest, in the discussion of the system of divine truth, that all mankind, sinners as well as saints, are free agents, and accountable to God. All mankind, elect and non-elect, are under obligation to repent and believe the gospel ; to love God, and keep his commandments ; to embrace the Holy Saviour, and be his faithful followers. On God's part, "All things are now ready." An all-sufficient atonement is made ; and nothing prevents the salvation of sinners, but their own *evil heart of unbelief*. Salvation is offered to all, and of course, to the non-elect, as well as the elect. These, in a state of nature, when they cannot be distinguished from the elect, are the proper subjects of the offers of the gospel. And when the non-elect perish in their sins, the fault is wholly their own. God, in his word and providence, evidently treats mankind as free and accountable creatures ; and all the offers, invitations, entreaties, and exhortations of the gospel, are evidently made with perfect sincerity. In an important sense, he is *not willing* that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. *In itself considered*, he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ; but that he turn from his evil way and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel."

6. The doctrine of election is so far from being a discouraging doctrine, as some suppose, that it is the basis of all hope of salvation. Considering the lost state of man, there is no other power but that of God, which is equal to the great work ; no other name, no other merit

but that of Christ. And since he has determined to save an innumerable multitude, by his grace, there is a gleam of hope in the case of all but the reprobate. All are subjects of the exhortation, "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope....AMEN."



ESSAY XVII.

Reprobation, and the Unpardonable Sin.

CONNECTED with the doctrine of election, divines have generally admitted the contrast, or what has been called the doctrine of reprobation. "By God's decree of reprobation," (to use the words of the Assembly of divines) "is meant his eternal purpose, according to his sovereignty, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, of passing by all the rest of the children of men, who are not elected; and leaving them to perish in their sins, unto the praise of the power of his wrath and infinite justice, in their everlasting punishment. Rom. ix. 21, 22. "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction?"

That God has an eternal purpose, respecting the sin and final condemnation of the non-elect, is as evident, as that he has an eternal purpose respecting the conversion and final salvation of the elect. His purpose concerning the non-elect, is indeed clearly implied in his purpose concerning the elect. All are totally sinful and condemned; and if a certain number is selected from the rest, and chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; the consequence is, and must be, that the remainder perish in their sins. They are said to be vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction. "Unto every good work reprobate."

Not only is the final condemnation of all the non-elect established by the eternal purpose of God; but, by the same eternal purpose, the way and means of their destruction are also established. As "All things work together

for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose :” so, on the other hand, all things work together for evil to them that hate God, to them who are *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath*. All the means of grace, by which the saints are ripening for eternal glory, are perverted by sinners, and become the means of ripening them for everlasting ruin. All the solemn and weighty doctrines of divine truth, and especially the doctrines of election and reprobation, when they appear by their fruits, in the conversion of one, and not of another ; excite great dissatisfaction in the hearts of those who are in the way to destruction. The ministers of the gospel in their faithful labours for the good of souls, are, a “sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. But to one, they are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other the savour of life unto life.” Sinners are gradually hardened by those very means, which, in their nature, tend most strongly to soften their hearts. The most afflictive providences, which, for a season, seem to break their hearts, are soon forgotten ; and they return, with increasing eagerness, to their wicked courses, and ripen faster than ever for endless woe. This is the *manner*, in which sinners are hardened. It is, perhaps, invariably effected by the abuse of some special means of conviction. Thus it was that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened. Miracles were wrought to enforce the demand made by Moses, that the Israelites should be released from their bondage. Miracles were a demonstration of divine authority. This visible display of divine authority was opposed and rejected by Pharaoh ; and of course, his heart was hardened. This was the way in which Christ hardened the hearts of the Jewish priests and rulers. He spake as never man spake ; and he wrought many miracles. In resisting these testimonies of the divinity of Christ, they became, at last, utterly hardened and reprobate. Without remorse, they could *crucify the Lord of glory*. Thus, speaking of the elect and non-elect, Paul draws the conclusion, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” “The elect hath obtained it,” hath obtained salvation, “and the rest were blinded.” In this sense, though not, perhaps, in the highest sense of the word, all the non-elect are called reprobate. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul, having exhorted

professing christians to self-examination, adds, "Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" *i. e.* ripening for destruction.

The non-elect are called the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction; which implies as real a purpose of divine wrath respecting them, as the purpose of divine mercy respecting the vessels of mercy.

Such are the instructions of the scriptures, respecting that reprobation of the non-elect, which is considered as a counterpart to the salvation of the elect. Reprobation, considered as a judicial act of the Deity, remains to be considered.

In connection with the great and important doctrines of Election and Reprobation, it may not be improper to attempt an explanation and improvement of the very alarming doctrine of the *unpardonable sin*. "There is a sin unto death," says the Apostle: and it appears to be in consequence of this sin, that God, by a judicial act, *gives men up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; gives them up to vile affections.* It is added, that, "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness." The Apostle, to the church of Thessalonica, speaking of *the man of sin, the son of perdition*, meaning the papal Antichrist, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; observes, that "for this cause, *God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" We read of those who are *reprobate concerning the faith*; and of those who are *abominable, disobedient, and to every good work, reprobate.* These several passages of scripture suggest to us the doctrine of an actual reprobation of heart; and an abandonment of God, to the commission of sin with greediness. Awful indeed must be that sin, which involves the whole soul and body in the slavery of Satan and of ungodly lusts.

We now come directly to the inquiry, in what the un-

pardonable sin consists? And we find, that a *grand peculiarity of this sin is, that it is a sin against the Holy Ghost.* Although every sin is offensive equally to the Triune God; yet certain crimes may be committed more directly against one person of the Godhead than the others. Unbelief, for instance, is a more direct affront to Christ, who is the faithful and true witness, than to the Father, or the Holy Ghost. Also, when sinners abandon themselves to all kinds of immorality, and to the open violation of the divine law; they offer a more particular affront to God the Father, who is our lawgiver, and to whom we are strictly bound to yield obedience and honour. But when mankind, with great audacity, oppose and vilify the special work of Divine grace, in the conviction and conversion of sinners, this is a more particular opposition and affront to the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of all grace. In this consists the sin unto *death.* It is a sin particularly against the Holy Ghost. It is a daring opposition to the last efforts of infinite grace; leaving no space for repentance.

Again we observe, It is an overt and external sin—a sin which cannot be committed merely in the heart. It is a *blasphemy*, or something equal to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Some have supposed that it must be a sin of the tongue, and cannot be committed by any other means but evil speaking. But Paul, who so narrowly escaped the sin unto death, was not only a *blasphemer*, but also a *persecutor, and injurious*; and it is intimated, that in all his wicked opposition to the church, and to the glorious work of divine grace, he approximated to the unpardonable sin. When he stood by, and consented to the death of Stephen, and when he punished Christians oft, in every synagoge; and when he made havoc of the church, and, entering into every house, haled men and women, and committed them to prison; and when they were put to death, gave his voice against them; and when he received a commission and authority from the chief priests and rulers, to go to Damascus, to bind and imprison and destroy all that called on the name of the Lord; it was *his general line of conduct*, and not simply *his evil speaking*, which exposed him to the sin unto death. It is a just maxim, that *actions speak louder than words.* The unpardonable sin is, doubtless, an external

sin committed with great malice of heart ; but not limited to the tongue.

We observe further ; it is a sin against great light ; and against the clear dictates of a well informed conscience. “ This is *the condemnation*,” said the Saviour to the reprobate Jews, “ that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.” To sin perversely, against a clear conviction of gospel truth, and against the known and acknowledged operations of the Holy Spirit, is the most presumptuous and desperate wickedness, of which we are capable. When the Saviour pronounced, respecting the enlightened and perverse Jews, that they “ had no cloak for their sins ;” the meaning was, that they were reprobate ; or judicially hardened.

One thing further respecting the unpardonable sin, is, that it is the fruit and effect of great malice of heart ; and especially in view of the sovereignty of divine grace, in the conversion, *only of the elect*. How great and desperate must be the malice of the heart, to induce a man, in open and daring defiance of the conviction of his own conscience ; and in the full expectation of working out his own damnation ; to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost ! There is doubtless, in all impenitent sinners, a strong opposition of heart to God, to his government, and to the dispensation of his grace. Through the ignorance that is in them, because of unbelief, and the blindness of their hearts, many sinners, like the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, strenuously and zealously oppose, even the work of the Holy Spirit. They declaim against awakenings, and revivals of religion ; and even persecute the zealous advocates for the work of grace. These, however, may be far from a state of final reprobation. Only let their eyes be opened, to see and realize the truth, as it is exhibited in the scriptures ; and to see the awful depravity of their hearts ; and they feel, as Paul did *when the commandment came*. “ When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Small and feeble is the malice of the common enemies of Christ, compared with that of the desperado, who commits the unpardonable sin, by doing violence to his own conscience.

We have now, in a way of explanation of this capital sin, found, that it is a sin particularly against the Holy

Ghost—that it is an overt and actual sin, consisting in blasphemy or something equally malignant—that it is a sin against great light and conviction of the truth; and that it is the fruit and effect of great malice of heart.

Further light may be cast on this subject, by what Paul says respecting his own wicked conduct, before his conversion. His statement is, that he was *a persecutor, a blasphemmer, and injurious*. But, says he, “I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief:” Plainly implying, that had he done the same things understandingly, and with a clear conviction, that by opposing the wonderful work of divine grace, he was opposing the Holy Ghost, and sealing his own damnation; he could never have obtained mercy. His ignorance, though but a slender excuse for his audacious conduct, was a palliation of his guilt, and rendered his sin pardonable.

Again; We have clear light and instruction respecting the sin unto death, from the reply of our Lord to the cavil of the chief priests and scribes, that *he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils*.

In reply to this cavil, our Lord, by the most conclusive reasoning, convicted the malicious cavillers, even on their own principles; and pronounced them guilty of the unpardonable sin. “How can Satan cast out Satan? For a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?” By whom do the children or prophets of Israel, perform miracles? By whom did Moses and the prophets perform miraculous works, to attest to their divine authority? It is an established point, and justly taken for granted by you, and by all the Jews, that miracles are a sure testimony of divine power and authority. By miracles were all your scriptures authenticated. Accordingly, Nicodemus, one of your chief rulers, frankly made to me this concession, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.” You know that I establish my claims, and vindicate my cause, in the same way, and by the same means by which Moses and the prophets have established their claims, and vindicated their cause. Even ye yourselves, convened in solemn council, have been constrained to say one to another, “What shall we do? for this man doth

many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans will indeed come, as he has prophesied, and take away both our place and nation." It is a given point, according to your own principle, that all men ought to believe on me. You know, that your cavil about my miracles goes as far to destroy the authority of Moses and the prophets, as to destroy my authority. You see the same evidence of the power and agency of God in my miracles, as in the miracles of Moses and the prophets. You allow and maintain, that all *their* miracles were wrought by the Spirit of God; and you have now full conviction in your consciences, that I also work miracles by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God, as you well know, is the immediate agent, by which I work miracles, as he was the immediate agent, by whom Moses wrought miracles. For he is the immediate agent, by whom every work is effected. "And if I cast out devils, and perform miracles by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you;" and you resist the kingdom of God at the hazard of your souls.

The Saviour having concluded his argument, and confounded the cavillers, solemnly charged them with the unpardonable sin, in the following words, "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." In Mark's gospel it is more plain. "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; *because they said, he hath an unclean Spirit.*" Because they said, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub.

Thus it appears, that the cavilling scribes and chief priests were guilty of the unpardonable sin; and this plain case casts light on the general subject. From this, we are led to conclude, that the direct and immediate agency of God, on the minds of mankind, is the agency of the Holy Ghost. Also the agency of God, by which miracles are wrought, is as particularly considered to be the agency of the Holy Ghost, as that by which the holy

scriptures were divinely inspired. With equal propriety, we may conclude that the immediate agency, by which the world was created, and is preserved and governed, is particularly, that of the Holy Ghost. It follows, therefore, that the sin unto death may be committed in various ways. It may be committed by maliciously cursing and blaspheming against the holy scriptures, as well as by directly blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, by whom they were divinely inspired. Blasphemy against the church of Christ, by those who acknowledge, that its members are born of God, is indirect blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Maliciously declaring that this world is a pernicious system, and was created by Beelzebub; and that it is under the direction of the infernal Spirits; would probably be considered as of the nature of the unpardonable sin.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It is natural to inquire, why this kind of sin is unpardonable? Why *any* sin should be unto death, is not for us to decide. God giveth not an account of this matter. But it is perhaps, both lawful and useful to inquire, why it should be this particular sin. It is not because this sin exceeds the merit of Christ's blood. For the merit of his blood is infinite. Nor is this, or any other sin, unpardonable, for the want of a disposition in the divine mind to exercise mercy. For the mercy of the Lord is infinite; and it endureth for ever. In an important sense, it is said, that he is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." Why then is this sin against the Holy Ghost unpardonable? It is so, probably, because it is the greatest of all sins.* Since there must be a sin, never to be forgiven, it appears to be a dictate of justice and propriety, that this should be the greatest of all sins. The greatest of all crimes are made capital, rather than smaller crimes, in civil government. The murderer, rather than the petty thief, must surely be put to death.

* Some suppose this sin to be unto death, on account of its nature and tendency. On this point I feel diffident.

The work of the Holy Spirit, especially in the conversion of sinners, who have utterly rejected the Saviour, is the last effort of infinite love and mercy. If this be maliciously rejected and blasphemed, what can be expected, but “a certain, fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?”

2. From the view we have taken of the unpardonable sin, it is evident, that no person who has a tender conscience and a trembling heart, is yet guilty of it. It is the hardened, presumptuous, audacious wretch, who has been guilty of the sin unto death. They pretend to be above such childish, and effeminate anxieties. They, therefore, who have the greatest anxiety and the most terrible apprehensions, are in the least danger of final reprobation. They are kept from the great transgression.

3. We learn, that no one ought to despair of salvation, on account of a deep and overwhelming sense of sin and guilt. This is so far from a state of reprobation, that it is the very state of mind, into which sinners are generally brought, previous to a saving conversion to Christ.

4. It appears from the subject, that the unpardonable sin is probably committed by multitudes, and committed much more frequently at the present day, than it was in the days of Christ and the apostles. As light increases, from age to age, the corruptions of the human heart are, of course, more and more excited; and more frequently do the cavilling enemies of God break out in malicious opposition to the work of divine power and grace. Especially is there great danger of the sin which shall never be forgiven, in seasons of special awakening. Then the distinguishing and sovereign grace of God is made manifest; and the enmity of many hearts is enkindled. As was said concerning the ministry of Christ, so may it be said concerning all special seasons of awakening, *that the thoughts of many hearts are revealed*. And some hearts are revealed with awful symptoms of reprobation. Do not some even boast, that having had experience of all that there is in religion, they have found it to be a cheat? Do they not speak lightly, and even blasphemously of the special works of the Holy Ghost? And may we not fear, that their case is hopeless?

Finally; It is to be considered, that the time draws

near, when all the sin of the finally impenitent, will become unpardonable. The inhabitants of the world of woe will be for ever given up to the unpardonable sin. It is therefore incumbent upon all, not only to avoid the sin unto death ; but to repent of all their sins ; and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to embrace, and enjoy, the hope of eternal life.



ESSAY XVIII.

Repentance and Conversion.

IN attending to the doctrines of election and reprobation, we have found, that God has not chosen any sinful men to salvation, unconditionally, and at all events. For it is expressly declared in scripture, that he “hath chosen them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love:” And that he hath “chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” We are also exhorted by the apostle, to “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord.” We find therefore, that faith and holiness, and sanctification of heart, are the necessary conditions of salvation. And the particular acts and exercises of holiness, which are noted in the scriptures of truth, as the special conditions of salvation, are *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Repentance and Conversion may therefore, be the subjects, now to be discussed. These are so nearly the same thing, as may render a separate consideration of them entirely unnecessary. Repentance, according to the most literal meaning of the word, in its common use, is a deep regret, and sorrow of heart for sin ; and this, not so much on account of its fatal consequences to ourselves, as on account of its odious and hateful nature ; and of its tendency to the dishonour of God, and to the ruin of his holy kingdom.

Repentance, according to the strict meaning of the word, in the original language, seems to be, or to imply, a change of mind, a change of counsel, or a *coming to one's*

senses, and to a right mind, and right feelings towards the law and government of Jehovah. Conversion also signifies turning about; and in a religious sense, turning from sinful courses, and sinful objects. In an appropriate sense, it signifies returning *unto the Lord*. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Sinners, in their impenitency, depart from God, and pursue the paths of error and iniquity. They wander, and love to wander. They follow after vanity, and choose the road to death. By repentance and conversion, they, both in heart and practice, return unto the Lord. Repentance, if it be distinguishable from conversion, is a term which has more particular reference to the exercises of the heart; but conversion is a term, which has more particular reference to the external practice. Repentance and conversion, are evidently, the first fruits of regeneration by the Holy Spirit; by which a principle of holiness is begotten in the hearts of God's elect. Of course, these are holy exercises. As such they are required in the book of Ezekiel. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin." "*Turn yourselves, and live ye.*"

As a further illustration of this subject, we notice, that repentance is said to be towards God, probably meaning, that is more particularly towards God the Father. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and conversion, which are towards God, have not so particularly Christ and his atonement, and "the apprehension of the mercy of God in him," for their object; as God the Father, who is the great lawgiver and governor of the universe. Repentance and conversion to God, imply a special and cordial acknowledgment of the justice of the law, and an approbation of the divine government. "The law of the Lord is perfect," says the true penitent, "converting the soul." The truly penitent soul returns to God, with humility of heart, and godly sorrow; not so much from the hope of forgiveness and salvation, as from a sense of the justice and importance of the divine law, and the hate-

fulness of all transgression. Repentance implies self-loathing, and self-abhorrence. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It implies true submission, *unconditional submission to God*. "Not my will, but thine be done." It implies a hearty approbation of his righteous judgments. "Seven times a day will I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments."

Thus it appears, that true repentance, and conversion to God are the first, and the immediate fruits of that change of heart, which is effected by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. All who are the happy subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace, find themselves and one another walking in a new course, pursuing new objects; renouncing in a good measure, the things of the world; seeking first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof. "Old things are passed away, and, behold! all things are become new."

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Repentance and conversion to God, are evidently, the free and voluntary exercises of the human mind! In these exercises, the true penitent is not passive, but altogether active. On this ground it is, that sinners are exhorted and commanded, immediately to repent, and turn from all their transgressions. "God now commandeth all men, every where, to repent." A summary of all that God requires of sinners, is no less than this, "That men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Repent, and be converted," or rather *convert*, as it is in the original language; "that your sins may be blotted out." "Turn ye, turn ye," is the emphatical language of God to his rebellious people, "for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" It is hence evident, that repentance is a perfectly free and voluntary act of the sinner, performed in the full possession of moral liberty and free agency.

2. It is equally plain from scripture, however, that repentance and conversion are the gift of God; and are the effects of his own infinite power and grace. On the day of Pentecost, the distressed and convicted multitude, who were pricked in the heart, and who cried out "Men

and brethren, what shall we do?" were directed to repent. This was their indispensable duty, and an important and necessary condition of their salvation. But the three thousand converts were evidently brought to repentance, by the power of the Holy Ghost. That day was memorable, on account of the work of the Lord, and not on account of any thing effected by human agency. If so, then repentance and conversion are the gift of God.

This point is further established, by what is said concerning the success of the gospel at the house of Cornelius. When Peter had distinctly rehearsed this matter to the christian brethren at Jerusalem, they glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." Repentance, it appears, is a heavenly gift, a rich grant from the Father of mercies.

In the prophecy of Jeremiah, we have a plain testimony of divine agency, in producing genuine repentance, and a saving conversion to God. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely, after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed," or *spiritually taught*, "I smote upon my thigh;" a token of contrition. Ezekiel also bears the same testimony. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Repentance is, invariably, the free act of the humble and contrite heart; and yet it is, invariably, the effect of divine influence on the heart. This matter is set in the clearest and most conspicuous light, in Paul's noted charge to Timothy. The doctrines of divine and human agency are, in a manner, blended together in these words; "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance; to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Thus evident it is from the scriptures, that although God gives repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, by his own

infinite power ; yet the subjects of it are never deprived of free agency, for a single moment ; but, in an important sense, they do, by their active penitence, recover themselves from the slavery of sin and satan. This is agreeable to our own observation. We are sometimes witnesses of the power of the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of sinners : and, at the same time, witnesses of the voluntary agency of the converts, in their penitence, and holy conversation.

3. We remark, that repentance does not imply a sorrow for sin, considered merely as an event of Providence, which will be overruled for the general good. On this ground, Joseph administered comfort, rather than rebuke to his wicked and cruel brethren. “ Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life.” “ As for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good.” You acted a criminal part ; but the event brought about by your conduct, was as important as the existence of the church. The same may be said respecting all the sin in the universe. In itself considered, it is an awful and inexcusable evil ; but as an event, which is necessary for the richest display of the glory of God, in the great work of redemption ; and for the greatest final good and happiness of the intelligent system ; it is not to be considered as a subject of regret. Thus it appears, that evangelical repentance, or godly sorrow for sin, does not imply a sorrow that God has suffered sin to take place in the universe. Such a sorrow as this, would be reproachful to the ever blessed God.

4. Scarcely any other christian virtue is so visible in its fruits, as genuine repentance. Hence we see the pertinency of the exhortation, “ Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.” It produces so great a change of views, of sentiments, of conduct and conversation, that the fruits must be visible to every candid observer. Instead of self-justification, which is so congenial to the natural heart, the language of the true penitent is, “ Behold, I am vile !” “ I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” The truly penitent distinguish themselves from the world, by refraining from all vain company, all filthy conversation, all lying and slander, all profanity, rioting and lewdness ; all railing and strife ; all

oppression, injustice and knavery. By the truly penitent, the sabbath is "called a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable." It is remembered and sanctified. The worship of God, social and secret, family worship in particular, is constantly, and delightfully observed. The ordinances of Christ are devoutly celebrated. The true penitent is also humble, solemn, circumspect; always ready to confess his faults, always disposed to esteem others better than himself, more worthy of honour—and he "seeks not the honour that cometh from men, but that which cometh from God only." He is sober, chaste, temperate in all things. By these precious fruits of repentance, the subjects of this grace are easily distinguished from the impenitent and the ungodly. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

In the discussion of the doctrine of repentance, we see how widely different it is from that compunction, and horror of conscience, which drove Judas Iscariot, and which has driven thousands of wretched mortals to despair and suicide. We see how widely it differs from the *sorrow of the world, that worketh death*. True repentance and conversion, beget no gloominess and horror of mind, no painful sensations, except such as are conducive to godliness. It is a chosen and pleasing exercise of the renewed heart. The valley of humiliation is a pleasant valley. Conscious of a broken and contrite heart, the true penitent draws sensibly near to God, and offers such sacrifices, as he will not despise. In his own view, he sinks to nothing; that God may be all in all. His chief object, for time and eternity, is to glorify God, and to see his glory. He accounts it a privilege to be humble, and to abhor his selfish heart; and he cherishes these views and exercises, as the only preparation for the inheritance of the glories of the heavenly state.



ESSAY XIX.

The Christian Faith.

HAVING discussed the doctrine of repentance, it is in systematic order, to attend, in the next place, to the doc-

trine of the christian faith. For these two ingredients constitute all the essentials of the christian character.

The primary and literal meaning of the word, *faith*, is *believing*. To believe what a man testifies, is to have faith in his testimony. To believe in what God testifies, is to have faith in God. Faith has respect to things which cannot be absolutely known; but which depend for their proof on certain testimony. Where absolute knowledge ends, there faith begins. And faith is a proper and necessary substitute for knowledge. In matters which exceed the knowledge and comprehension of men, we have to confide in God, who gives ample proof of whatever he declares. But this is not the whole that belongs to the definition of christian faith; for all that is implied in this belief of the divine testimony, is nothing more than a speculative faith, which the devils, as well as men, may possess. But in the christian faith, much more is implied, than a simple concession and a cold assent to the divine testimonies. Sinners may believe, speculatively, in all the testimonies of God, being rationally convinced of their truth. They may believe, and even contend for the truth, respecting the character and government of the Most High; and respecting the perfections of that law, by which they stand condemned to utter and eternal destruction. They may indeed believe in all the doctrines, precepts and institutions of the gospel, with a heart bitterly opposed to all the articles of their speculative faith. This faith, however clear and strong it may be, is far from being the christian faith; for the christian faith, is a "faith which works by love." Holy love is the source and fountain, from whence proceed all the christian virtues, and all christian conduct. Repentance, and humility of heart, as well as the christian faith, work by love. Hope, and confidence in Christ *work by love*. When the heart is renewed, by regenerating grace, every christian exercise flows spontaneously from it, as streams from a copious fountain. Repentance takes the lead, and faith, hope, and joy in God, follow in close succession. All the fruits of the Spirit are, by the Apostle, resolved into one head or fountain. "The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE." Thence follow the whole concatenation of virtues, "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Among the rest we find, that

faith holds a conspicuous rank : “ *Faith which works by love.*”

From these general remarks on the christian faith, we may now proceed to a more strict definition. In the holy scriptures, we find many things recorded, which serve to explain this doctrine. The most correct definition, Heb. xi. is in these words ; “ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The objects of evangelical faith are always invisible, during the present life. They are things, concerning which we can have no knowledge, except so far as we are informed by divine revelation. But, by faith in God’s testimonies, we realize unseen objects almost as clearly as we do the objects of sight. Especially is this the case, since the objects proposed are such as meet the wishes and desires of our hearts. *Things hoped for* are easily believed ; and things both hoped for and believed, are in a high degree realized. Things which we neither hope for, desire, nor expect ; scarcely have an existence in our minds. They are void of any reality, in our daily meditations. But how strongly, and interestedly do we anticipate the darling objects of our belief, and our hope !

Not only is faith the substance of things hoped for ; but it is the *evidence of things not seen*. So cordially does it embrace the great system of divine truth, and the things relating to Christ’s kingdom, that a little evidence is sufficient for their confirmation. If a man greatly delights in the doctrines, laws and testimonies contained in the holy scriptures, he feels no want of evidence for their support. In the exercise of true faith, the law of the Lord appears to be perfect ; and the plan of infinite wisdom and grace, by which the law is vindicated, and sinners saved, appears to be most glorious. The true believer, feels no need of any greater evidence than he has already, of the truth of the christian system. He embraces it readily, because his heart is in it. Thus it appears, that, “ With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness.”

Of the things which have been stated, this is a summary : That the true christian faith is a cordial belief and approbation of the whole system of revealed truth, as it is recorded and testified in the holy scriptures : And especially, a most cordial belief and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the plan of redemption, by his atoning blood. For, of all the mysteries revealed in the

bible, this is the greatest, and the most glorious. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Every object or article of the christian faith is a revealed mystery; and to the believer, is glorious. We read of the "mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." To believe, and rejoice, and confide, in all these mysteries so clearly revealed, is the exercise of evangelical faith. A lively description of this faith we have in these words of the Apostle: "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy of the Christian faith arises, not so particularly, from any interest of our own, which is secured by it; as from its tendency to glorify God, and to promote the great interests of his kingdom. It arises, not from an apprehension of our being made *more worthy* of the kingdom of heaven. For a sense of sin and unworthiness constantly increases, in proportion to the increase of the Christian faith. A view of the wonderful work of redemption, by the blood of Christ, and of its glorious fruits, is one of the principal sources of joy and transport, in the hearts of true believers. When the blessed Saviour had finished his ministry among men, he said to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." To him these were sources of unspeakable joy. Faith produces the same mind that was in Christ Jesus; the same joys and the same sorrows, the same temper of heart, and the same line of conduct. "If any man will be my disciple, or will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Those who are truly humble and self-condemned, who feel justly deserving of eternal misery, notwithstanding all that they can do or suffer in this life; are pleased with the plan of salvation by the cross of Christ. For this corresponds exactly with the views which they entertain of God and of themselves. They find that the law of God, in which they now delight, forbids the exercise of mercy, until it is vindicated and honoured, by an infinite sacrifice for sin. They are satisfied and pleased, that

God should glorify his justice, as well as his mercy ; be the consequences what they may, as respects themselves, and their fellow men. Accordingly, they see all the divine attributes displayed by Jesus Christ. He appears, as he really is, the chief among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely.

REMARKS.

1. If faith springs from love ; and love is the fulfilling of the law ; it follows, that the natural and genuine effect of faith, is holy obedience to the commands of God. Nothing gives the divine law such a predominating influence upon the heart and life, as the Christian faith. Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and who, of all the human race, ever yielded such obedience to God ? Who, but the Father of all them that believe, was ever found ready and willing, at the divine command, to offer a darling son, and a child of promise, as a burnt sacrifice ? “ Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness ; and he was called the friend of God.” Every true believer is the friend of God ; and of course, obedient to his law. In short, nothing but faith gives security for a holy and obedient life. “ Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid, yea, we establish the law.” Do we, by the doctrine of faith in Christ, render obedience to the law of God unnecessary to salvation ? In what then does the Christian religion consist ? And how does Jesus Christ save his people from their sins ? What, but a holy obedience to God constitutes a moral difference between believers and infidels ? Concerning those who profess that they know God, but in works deny him, it is said, that they are “ abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.”

2. It is evident from the discussion of this subject, that evangelical repentance is implied in the Christian faith. In the order of nature, if not of time, repentance must be antecedent to faith in Christ. For no one can possibly be reconciled to Christ, and to the doctrine of salvation by his atoning blood, without real humility of heart, and godly sorrow for sin. For, by the vicarious sufferings, and precious blood of Christ, sin is utterly condemned, and the law is magnified and made honourable. The heart that embraces the Saviour by a living and approving faith,

must certainly be a penitent and broken heart. True believers are those who *accept the punishment of their transgressions*, as it is exhibited by the cross of Christ, and justify the law and government of God. But these exercises of heart imply genuine repentance. Thus, in the order of nature, and in fact, repentance precedes evangelical faith, and is preparatory to it. In the order of expression, repentance commonly precedes faith. "Repent ye therefore, and believe the gospel." The Apostle Paul's testimony was, Repentance towards God, and then faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. A believer, in a state of impenitency, is at best, but a mere speculative believer; and a stranger to that faith, by which the heart is purified. Accordingly, the first object of the ministry of John the Baptist was, to inculcate the duty of all men to repent; and this duty was urged expressly, as the necessary qualification of heart, to believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Christ. For the same purpose, Christ sent forth his disciples to preach saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven was to be inherited by faith; but not by the faith of a proud, impenitent, self-righteous and depraved heart.

3. By the doctrine of the Christian faith we learn, that the distinction between justification by works, and by faith in Christ, does not consist in believers being released from the requirements of the law; but in their being released from *the curse*. "Christ hath redeemed us," not from the duty of obedience: but "from *the curse of the law*, being made a curse for us." Obedience, in this case, is necessary to witness our faith in Christ, and our reconciliation of heart to God; but not to merit the forgiveness of our sins. The gospel, though it requires obedience to Christ, is not of the nature of a law, which requires us to *obey and live*. The covenant of grace is widely distinct from the covenant of works, which makes obedience the sole ground of justification. The gospel is of the nature of a divine testimony, in which we are bound heartily to confide: "And whoever receives this testimony, sets to his seal, that God is true." Like Abraham, he believes on him that justifies *the ungodly*; not the impenitent, not the disobedient, not the enemies of Christ, not the unbelieving; but the penitent, the converted, the broken hearted sinner; or, in plain terms,

the true believer in Jesus Christ. This man is the only proper subject of forgiveness and salvation. This is the man, whose faith works by love, and whose hope is only in the Lord. "Shew me thy faith, without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."



ESSAY XX.

Justification by Faith.

HAVING attended, in the last Essay, to the doctrine of the Christian faith, we may now proceed to an investigation of the doctrine of *justification by faith*. Justification, in its primary sense, and as a legal term, signifies acquittance from the charge of criminality, or a declaration of innocence. This is implied in the instruction given by Moses to the judges of Israel. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." This is the strict meaning of justification by the law. Had man never apostatized, this would have been the ground of his justification in the sight of God. On this ground, the elect angels, who are swift to do the will of God, are justified. This is a legal justification, of which fallen and condemned man can have neither claim nor hope. But in the evangelical sense, the word has a meaning widely different. In this sense, it is called the justification of the ungodly. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not," that is, worketh not with a view to merit a reward; "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," or sinful men, "his faith is counted for righteousness." It is reckoned to him as an equivalent for a perfect righteousness; because it embraces Jesus Christ, and relies on his merits.

Thus it appears, that by the ungodly is meant, not the impenitent, nor the unbelieving. For repentance and faith in Christ are the necessary conditions of salvation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," and "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Many and various have been the definitions of gospel justification. The assembly of divines say, that "justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." By faith, Jesus Christ is received; and by faith, all his doctrines and testimonies are embraced. But the very act of justification is an acquittance from just condemnation, and from deserved punishment; and a restoration to the everlasting love and favour of God, only through faith in Jesus Christ. "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." He receives the forgiveness of his sins, and an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. He becomes an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "Being justified by his grace, we are made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." But this special act of divine grace is limited to believers only. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man, Jesus Christ, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

In the third chapter to the Romans, the Apostle having exhibited, in glowing colours, the total sinfulness, and utter condemnation of all mankind, proceeds to the most clear, and illustrious statement of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin—For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." To procure the pardon and final salvation of sinners, in a way that will do honour to the inflexible justice of God, is the great thing necessary to gospel justification. And this way of pardon and salvation is clearly stated in the passage of scripture before us. It is *through faith* in the blood of Christ, to declare and vindi-

cate the justice of God, that remission of sins, is preached in his name.

It appears, on the whole, that the doctrine of justification implies several things. It is a special act of divine grace. Nothing at all is done by sinners, to merit the forgiveness of their sins, and the everlasting favour of God. They are not only unprofitable servants, but infinitely injurious and ill deserving. Their justification, therefore, is an act of infinite grace to the most vile, the most unworthy, and hell deserving.

Justification is also through the blood and death of Jesus Christ. "Being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him." "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Christ died for the ungodly; died the just for the unjust; died for our sins, according to the scriptures." "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Had he not risen from the dead, how could he vindicate his cause? If Christ be not risen from the dead, faith, and hope are vain.

Another prominent idea in the doctrine of justification is, that it is obtained, only by faith, in Jesus Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Therefore is it of faith, that it might be by grace." "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "The just," or those who are justified by Christ, "*shall live by faith.*" By faith, the humble and contrite soul, enters heartily into the same views of God's law and government, which Christ manifested, when he laid down his life for us. The Christian faith, by which sinners are justified, has for its leading object, the Saviour, who, by his humiliation and death, expressed the strongest possible attachment to the divine law; as well as the greatest possible love and compassion to sinners. So that he was both a merciful and faithful high priest. By him, "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." True faith embraces the law, as well as the gospel. It embraces and approves of the sentence of condemnation, and accepts the punishment of all the transgressions of the law.

Thus, by faith, the soul is united to Christ; and by means of this union, God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. If, by faith in Christ, the law of God is vindicated and honoured, then certainly, faith is the proper condition of justification.

It may be added, that justification by faith implies great humility and abasement of heart. The true believer must realize his infinite unworthiness, criminality, and guilt; before he will look to the cross of Christ for mercy and forgiveness. He must realize his dependence on the riches of divine grace; and never feel disposed, in the highest exercises of faith, to make any other plea than that of the Publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." In this state of mind, disposed to honour, equally, all the attributes of God, his sins are forgiven; and, like the humble publican, he is justified by Christ. He is adopted into the family of God, and commences a brotherhood with the Saviour, whose image he bears. By faith, he becomes an heir of heaven. But in this life, he must be deeply humbled before God. Like his Lord and master, he must humble himself to be exalted; and suffer with him, to reign with him. He must deny himself, take up his cross and follow him.

Such is the humiliating doctrine of justification by faith. In the scriptures, it is stated as a contrast to justification by the works of the law. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law;" for "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

REMARKS.

1. Faith being a holy exercise of heart, peculiarly acceptable to God, and being the condition of pardon and justification, some may still inquire, after all that has been said on the subject, "What is the difference between justification by faith, and justification by works?" To cast further light on this subject, we answer; Justification by works wholly excludes the Mediator from any part of the great work of salvation. And of course, it is taking

the ground of infidelity ; and rejecting the whole gospel. But justification by faith, is through an infinite Mediator, and an infinite atonement, by his most precious blood. This plan secures the honour of the divine law ; but the plan of salvation by works, makes no provision for the honour of a broken law, nor for the pardon of the guilty. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" but not of the forgiveness of sin ; for the law knows nothing of divine mercy. *Obey perfectly, and live ; disobey in one point, and die.* This is the tenour of the law. For "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Surely, the difference between justification by works, and justification by faith in Christ, is very wide and conspicuous.

2. In the light of this subject, we discover the great error of those who hold, that salvation is partly by works, and partly by grace. The current doctrine of the scriptures respecting salvation by Christ, is, that he is *all in all*. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Christ alone, is the hope of glory. The Apostle is decisive, that salvation is of works only, or of grace only. "If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace : otherwise work is no more work." The idea is, that justification by works, in our fallen and condemned state, is a perfect contrast to justification by faith. The two plans cannot be blended together. Repentance and faith in Christ, and evangelical obedience, are real virtues, and are the sum of christian holiness. But even these best virtues, which are the condition of salvation, have no merit in themselves, to atone for a single sin ; and they do not at all diminish the grace of God in our salvation. How then can any one imagine, that his mere selfish morality, his *dead works*, can avail any thing towards his salvation ? Most certainly, if salvation be at all of grace, it must be by grace alone. Justification is *doubtless by grace alone*. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

3. The discussion of this subject revives in our minds the impropriety of a current mode of expression among divines, that believers are justified by the *righteousness* of Christ. If, by the righteousness of Christ, is meant his sacrifice for sin, or his atoning blood ; we do well to express this idea, in scripture language. It is plainly said

in scripture, that we are justified *by his blood*, and saved from wrath through him ; that without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins ; and, that the church of God was purchased with his own blood. Truly, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; and this was required of him, to make an atonement for sinful men. The death of the cross, rather than any mere acts of righteousness, was the ground of justification. Christ died, *the just for the unjust* ; died as a substitute for sinners. But was his moral rectitude a substitute for that of sinners ? Did his obedience answer for the obedience of sinners ? Or did he, by his obedience, atone for the disobedience of sinners ? Or, is there the least need of a Redeemer, for any purpose but to make an atonement for the sins of the world, and to prepare the way, by his own blood, for the pardon and salvation of the penitent, and all that embrace him by a living, and justifying faith ? The voluntary sufferings of Christ, in behalf of perishing sinners, afford a demonstration of his perfect holiness, and infinite benevolence. But his holiness and benevolence did not constitute an atonement for sin. By his benevolence and mercy, he was induced to offer his life in sacrifice to divine justice ; and in this consisted the atonement, by which believers are justified.

4. The doctrine of justification by faith has a strong tendency to promote religion and morality. The doctrine of justification by works, cultivates a spirit of pride and boasting. But on the plan of justification by faith, and by free grace, boasting is excluded. When once the crucified Saviour is embraced, nothing remains as a ground of vain glorying. His examples are those of self-denial, and pure benevolence. His precepts, promises, threatenings, all tend to establish holy principles and practices ; and to eradicate the seeds of vice and iniquity from the heart. But above all ; the sufferings of Christ, to redeem us to God by his blood, are calculated to break the rocky heart, and to produce a humble and holy life. The christian faith, in its nature, is holy, and resembles the Spirit of Christ. It is a spirit of meekness, of love, of patience and forbearance ; and especially is it a spirit of devotion—a spirit of prayer and praise. They who enter deeply into the great doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ ; and yet continue to be immoral and profane ; must be, to all intents, reprobates.

ESSAY XXI.

Perseverance.

ALL the doctrines of grace express or imply the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to eternal life. Particularly is this implied in the doctrine of justification. And it is plainly declared, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." Justification by faith, as we have found, implies, not only the forgiveness of sin, but an unfailing title to eternal life. "Being justified by his grace, we are made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" an established, permanent peace. "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There is no more subjection to a state of sin and condemnation. This is the plain import of the doctrine of justification, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of election, or predestination, equally proves the doctrine of perseverance. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Not but that they are chargeable with indwelling sin, and many external crimes, in this state of trial and temptation. But who shall justly charge them with apostasy from God? and from the christian faith? If we duly consider when, and for what purpose they are elected; we shall, at one step, come to a demonstration of the doctrine of perseverance. But, in the scriptures, we read clearly, when, and for what purpose, they are elected. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace; wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." To christians it is said, "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." *From the beginning,* as respects the purposes and exercises of the Divine

mind, means the same as *from eternity*. For who that believes in the immutability of God, can imagine that he has any new purposes, or purposes formed in time? It is therefore, evident, that God's election of all those who ever become the subjects of his grace, is an eternal and immutable election. And for what purpose they are chosen, we have already seen; "*That they should be holy:*" *That they should obtain salvation*. Since it is evident, that salvation is by grace alone; since no man will, of his own accord, come unto Christ, that he may have life; it is reasonable to conclude, that whenever divine, renewing grace is exercised, in the conversion of sinners, it is, by the same grace, rendered effectual to their salvation. Hence the Apostle, in his letter to the saints at Philippi, expresses his confidence in *this one thing*, that "he who had begun a good work in them, would perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."

If the perseverance of the saints depended on their own strength and constancy, all would soon fall away to perdition. Unsupported by the special grace of God, not even a patriarch, or a prophet would ever have entered into the kingdom of heaven. But, on the plan of divine grace, christians are said to be "kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." If so, then how can they fall away to final and eternal perdition? Who can pluck them out of the hands of Christ, or of his Father? If God's purposes, and the exertions of his power may be frustrated here in the infancy of our existence; why not hereafter, in the eternal world? And why do the elect angels persevere? What security is there for the perpetuity of the church on earth, or of the church in heaven? God has absolutely promised to build up his church to all generations; so that no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper. He has promised, that a multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, shall be saved. But if the perseverance of all individual saints be insecure; then all are in danger of falling from grace; and even the whole church, consisting of individuals, is liable, in a very short time, to become utterly extinct. The consequence is, that all the rich and precious promises respecting the glorious MILLENNIUM, are groundless and hopeless. Set aside the doctrine of perseverance, and no hope remains of such a glorious period of the church, as the scriptures

have so abundantly promised. Set aside the doctrine of perseverance, and not one of the divine promises, in the covenant of redemption, nor in the covenant of grace is secure. In the eternal covenant of redemption, God the Father has made rich and glorious promises to his Son. One is, that, in consequence of his humiliation, and sufferings for sin, as predicted in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; "He shall see his seed, *see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.*" "Therefore," saith the Father, "will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." In the second Psalm we read another promise of the Father to the Son; "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Many and great are the promises to Christ in the eighty-ninth and other Psalms; and in the prophets. A specimen is this: "Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." This is the true David, the Messiah, who richly merited the promises. But all these, and an hundred more infinitely great and precious promises, will doubtless fail for ever, should the doctrine of perseverance fail. Also the promises in the covenant of grace will be groundless. The covenant of grace is made between God, even the Mediator, and all true believers. It was expressly said to be made between the Lord and Abraham. "I will make my covenant *between me and thee.*" The substance of this covenant is, that true believers have the promise of salvation. And the Lord also gives precious intimations of saving mercy to the *seed* of the faithful. "*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee in their generations,*" is the summary of the promises. All the rich and precious promises of this covenant depend on the truth of the doctrine of perseverance. For, "He only that endureth unto the end, shall be saved."

We now proceed to a number of plain testimonies of scripture, to establish, more fully, the doctrine before us. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” These and many other things in the Psalms, are exactly in point. Through the imperfection of his heart, David fell into some great and crying sins. But he was, at no time, utterly cast down. At no time, did he cease to be a subject of inward, sanctifying grace. If he, who had been so wonderfully enlightened, and had tasted more, perhaps, than any other man, of the heavenly gift; had actually fallen away; it would surely, have been impossible to renew him again to repentance. But, of the repentance of David, and even of the most prompt and genuine repentance of David; who can entertain a doubt? After his grievous lapses, as well as before, he was *the man after God's own heart*; and fulfilled his will.

In the new testament, as well as the old, we have ample evidence of the doctrine of perseverance. Relating to the covenant of redemption, the Saviour says, “All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” “And this is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up at the last day.” The plain import is this, that of all who were given to Christ, in the covenant of redemption, as the reward of his sufferings, he should lose none; but should raise up the whole with him to eternal glory. Speaking of his followers, the Saviour adds this further testimony; “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

In the eighth chapter to the Romans, we have as decisive evidence of the doctrine of perseverance, as can be expressed in human language. Speaking of the Saviour's intercession for the saints, according to the will of God, the Apostle adds, “And we know, that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For, whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” If all things work together for the good of Christians, and if they are brought

into a state of brotherhood, and heirship with the Son of God; will they not be continued the subjects of persevering grace, till they obtain the eternal inheritance? It is added, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also *maketh intercession for us.*" Will the blessed Redeemer, who has died for our sins, and risen again for our justification; who has ascended to heaven, and become an infinite advocate and intercessor for all his saints; pleading for them, and claiming them, as the reward of his humiliation and sufferings, according to the covenant of redemption; will the faithful Redeemer, after all this, suffer his saints to apostatize? become reprobate? and bring an indelible reproach upon his kingdom? In prayer to the Father, Christ says, "I know that thou hearest me always." Will he refuse to hear his intercession for his elect, who are given to him as trophies of his victory over all the powers of darkness? The memorable passage before us proceeds: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Holy Ghost, foreseeing what strenuous opposition would be made, in every successive age of the Christian church, to the doctrine of perseverance by grace alone; took care, it seems, to make a statement, *and proof* of this doctrine, which exceeds almost every thing of the kind, on any subject. To say more, in confirmation of this doctrine, must be wholly needless.

REMARKS.

1. It is evident from the discussion of this subject, that the actual perseverance of the saints consists in growth of grace. The growth of the children of God, like the growth of natural children, may often be retarded; and at times be imperceptible. But, at other times, the progress may be visible and great. In their Christian childhood, they "desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." Christians delight to search the scriptures; of course, they grow in knowledge. They delight in Christian conversation; of course, they grow in brotherly love. They call the sabbath a delight; of course, they grow in Christian fellowship, and social improvement; and the worship and ordinances of the sanctuary, become more and more interesting. They are gradually weaned from the world, and become more and more humble, penitent, patient, submissive and joyful in God. At some times, as the Apostle says, "Their faith grows exceedingly;" so that "believing, they rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is essential to the Christian character. "For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day." Where actual perseverance is realized, there is evidence of religion; but where this evidence fails, there is awful reason to fear, that all the past appearances of religion are a delusion. Thus it is, that the Apostle John assigns the reason of apostasies from the profession and external practice of religion. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us."

2. Actual perseverance, being a solemn test of our character, and exhibiting so clearly, the sovereignty of God, in the bestowment of his grace, is, to sinners, an alarming and offensive doctrine. On these accounts it is, that so many oppose the doctrine, choosing rather to trust their eternal interest in their own hands, than in the hands of the wise and holy Sovereign of the universe. In their own strength, they hope to persevere, and work out their final salvation; little considering the remainder of the text, "For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

3. Though it be by divine grace, that the saints persevere; yea, though it be the same as a continuation of the great work of regeneration; yet it requires the appointed means and motives of the gospel. "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" but always in the use of proper means and motives. Mankind, being free moral agents, never act, but in the view, and under the influence of motives. It is therefore of the utmost importance, to present, constantly, to the minds of Christians, the most powerful motives to perseverance. For to prove that they are Christians indeed, they must "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; to whom be glory, both now and for ever.".....AMEN.



ESSAY XXII.

Self-Denial, and True Benevolence.

AT the head of all that is experimental and practical in religion, stands the important doctrine of *self-denial*; which is manifested in acts of pure benevolence, or *holiness*. Holiness, as we have found, comprises the whole moral character of God; and it equally comprises all that is morally excellent in man. For "love is the fulfilling of the law." Pure love, or benevolence, is holiness; and to understand its nature and operations, is to understand the nature of true religion. Errors concerning the nature of holiness, or true benevolence, involve a general system of error, respecting both doctrine and practice.

The contrast to holy love, is selfishness; and it is easy to see, that the principle of selfishness is subversive, not only of the law, but of the gospel. Had Christ acted on the selfish principle, he would never have come down from heaven, to die for sinners. And had all mankind acted on the selfish principle, no one would ever have been a believer and follower of Christ. For his testimony is; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The selfish principle stands directly opposed to every doctrine which has been exhibited, and which will be exhi-

bited, in the system of truth before us. Of course, self-denial is the basis of all doctrinal and practical religion. The essence of the whole is pure benevolence, or holy love—pure, impartial, disinterested affection.

But, if it still be inquired, what is self-denial? It is a denial of self-interest. It is that holy disposition of heart, which was most clearly manifested, by the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the Saviour for sinners. No verbal definition of self-denial and true benevolence, can present the subject to our minds more clearly, than it is done by the examples of the blessed Redeemer. Acting in the capacity of a man, he evidently sought not his own glory; but the glory of him that sent him. Christ evidently, pleased not himself. *He went about doing good*, both to the bodies and souls of men; rather than seeking any private benefit. He laboured and suffered, not for his own private advantage; but for the honour of God, and for the salvation of perishing sinners. For them he lived, *as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; and for them he died, the accursed death of the cross. He made himself an offering, and a sacrifice for sin. Here we discover an astonishing instance of self-denial and pure benevolence. The marvellous condescension of the Saviour, in descending from his infinite dignity in heaven, to the death of the cross, is stated by the Apostle, expressly, as an example of self-denial, which we are required to imitate. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” In this statement, we discover the nature of self-denial, and true benevolence.

Self-denial is taught, not only by the examples, but by the precepts of Christ. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” “He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.” “If any man come to me, and” (comparatively speaking) “hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life

also, he cannot be my disciple." "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." The doctrine of self-denial is also strongly expressed by the beloved Apostle John. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," or of Christ, "because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." To lay down our lives for the good of our fellow-men, or for the defence and support of the cause and kingdom of Christ, is one of the strongest expressions of self-denial.

In the illustration of this important duty, let it be understood, that, by self-denial is not meant, a malevolent disposition towards ourselves; nor a disregard of our own interest and welfare. All that is meant by it is, that we be willing to make sacrifices of our own interest and welfare, and even of our own lives, as cases may require, for the sake of the greater interest of others, or the *greater general good*. Self-denial does by no means imply, that we are regardless of ourselves; but that we impartially regard others as we do ourselves. This is the very idea of the doctrine under consideration: and this is according to the spirit of the divine law. In the scriptures, we find particular laws and statutes, almost innumerable; but, all are comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." Selfishness, on the other hand, naturally *worketh ill to his neighbour*; and is, therefore, the violation of the whole law. Every step we take, on the selfish principle, exposes our neighbour's interest or character; and, what is infinitely more to be dreaded is, that it is reproachful to the ever blessed God; even to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is reproachful to the law, to the gospel, and to the grace of God. Thus evident it is, that holy love appears and operates, in works of self-denial, and pure disinterested benevolence.

The doctrine of self-denial, though derided by the wise men of the world as an affectation of being righteous overmuch; is clearly a fundamental and practical doctrine of the holy scriptures. It is also a plain dictate of reason. It is a doctrine which distinguishes between virtue and vice; and which commends itself to the consciences of all the friends of truth and godliness. This holy princi-

ple is celebrated by the Apostle, under the name of charity; and it is called *the bond of perfectness*. The highest attainments in wisdom and knowledge, the most splendid gifts of utterance, and even the gift of miracles and prophecy; the greatest possible liberality to the poor, and even the sacrifice of life in the best of all causes, without charity, or holy love, are accounted as nothing. Charity alone contains the essence of religion. "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It is added, that "charity never faileth." It shall abide for ever, while faith and hope shall terminate in vision and fruition.

From the view of what the Apostle denominates charity, "which is the bond of perfectness," it is evident, that self-denial is a leading feature in the real christian's character. He *suffereth long*, and is kind. "Charity *seeketh not her own*." Christian self-denial, which consists in a *denial of selfishness*, consists in regarding all rational, and even all sensitive beings, with a candid and impartial eye; and in regarding all interests and objects according to their intrinsic value and importance. Private good is, by no means, to be neglected, because it is *private*, and not public good. "He that provideth not for his own, and especially for them of his own house;" whether it be in spiritual or temporal things, "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Private good is as necessary to the man of true benevolence as to others. But in his view, its importance does not consist in its being his own private good, so much as in its being a *real good*. If it comes to himself, he rejoices, and is thankful for it. And if it comes to others, he also rejoices and is thankful. For, in some good measure, he loves his neighbour as himself.

On the subject of self-denial, we may further observe, that a very great and distinguishing part of this duty consists in love to our enemies. On the selfish principle, which is now, as it was in the time of Christ's ministry, a very popular principle; the moral law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," that is, thy friendly neighbour,

“and hate thine enemy.” But on the principle which is now advocated, the moral law, as uttered by the mouth of the Saviour, is “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” This important command is enforced irresistibly, by the example of our Heavenly Father. “For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.” All, both bad and good, friends and enemies, share alike, and in common, the bounties and blessings of a merciful providence. Yea, the divine example of love to enemies extends further. For, says the beloved John, “God commendeth his love towards us, in that when we were sinners, Christ died for us.” We are required to love the most vile and ungrateful—“to do good and lend, hoping for nothing again.” “For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Sinners also love those that love them.” “And do not even the publicans so?” The duty of love to enemies, gives ample support to the doctrine of self-denial. And this love is most evidently holy and disinterested. By this love, wherever it appears, christians are clearly distinguished from the ungodly world. By this, Christ distinguished himself, as the holy and merciful Saviour. For, so ardent was his love to his enemies, that he spent his last breath, under their torturing hands, in prayer for them: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Is it possible, that any man, who has heard of the life and death of the blessed Redeemer, should reject, for a moment, the great doctrine of self-denial, and love to enemies? In this, above all things, Christ was distinguished; and “If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

By all that has been said, however, respecting self-denial and love to enemies, it is not to be understood, that we are to have *delight in them*; or to love them, with a love of complacency. To love them with delight, or complacency, would exclude the idea of self-denial; and would imply, that we ourselves possess the same odious character, and are pursuing the same wicked courses. The holy Psalmist, speaking of the enemies of God, expressed, in the strongest terms, his utter abhorrence of them. “Do I not hate them, O Lord! that hate thee?”

And am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred—I count them mine enemies.” The Lord also has infinite abhorrence of the wicked. “The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.” “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” Innumerable are the expressions of his anger and hatred, though his very name and nature are *love*. Christ, whose benevolence was infinite, and whose love to his enemies was wonderful; was affected with a holy indignation against stupid unbelievers. “He marvelled because of their unbelief.” And “He looked round about upon the captious multitude with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” He felt and expressed the highest indignation against those sinners, for whom, in infinite benevolence and mercy, he laid down his life on the cross. Thus we see a wide difference between a love of complacency, and a holy, disinterested love of benevolence. Complacency is a holy affection, when it has for its object a holy character. But when it has for its object a wicked character, it is a wicked affection. Accordingly, we find, that love to the christian brethren, viewing them in their true character, is an evidence of a saving change of heart. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Can we but only be assured, that we delight in those very things, in which the true christian character consists, we may be well satisfied, that we have passed from death unto life. Cordial complacency and fellowship with real christians, cannot exist in the unregenerate heart. But if our love of christians be an interested and selfish affection, it is no evidence of real religion; nor of a holy complacency. It is, on the contrary, an evidence, that we are strangers to the nature of true religion; and liable to perish in a vain delusion.

REMARKS.

1. In attending to this subject, which exhibits the moral nature of the religion which we profess, as consisting essentially in self-denial, and holy love or benevolence; we are strongly impressed with the idea, that such doctrine as this is certainly from God. As the Apostle says, such doctrine as this IS NOT AFTER MAN. It is most

directly opposed to the views and feelings of every natural heart. From whence then could it proceed, but from the inspiration of the Almighty ?

2. The doctrine of self-denial, and true benevolence is altogether a *practical doctrine*. Let it be ever so well investigated, and ever so firmly believed, it can be of no advantage to us, unless it be put in daily practice. To what purpose can it be, *to hold the truth in unrighteousness* ? It will but aggravate our damnation. "For it had been better for us not to have known the way of life, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." "If ye know things, therefore, happy are ye, if ye do them."AMEN.



ESSAY XXIII.

Submission to God.

ONE of the most precious fruits of self-denial is a *humble and cordial submission to God*. This is a duty which is generally acknowledged, and even most commonly professed by mankind, especially on their dying beds. Happy would it be, could we discover, in all instances, good evidence of the sincerity of this profession. But of this evidence, we have reason to fear, there is, in many instances, a great deficiency. For there is what is called a *forced submission*; as well as one that is voluntary, and delightful. And the more excellent and important this duty appears to be; so much the more is it liable to its counterfeits. Gold and silver have their counterfeits: but where do we discover the counterfeits of iron or lead? Submission to God is infinitely more precious than gold and silver. But how often do mankind deceive themselves, by a pitiful resemblance. They find all resistance to the divine will unavailing; and conclude, as the last resort, to make their submission to a merciful God. Of this, they make a righteousness; and on this they place their dependence, as the condition of divine favour, and of eternal life. Since we have reason to conclude, that many delude themselves with a mistaken idea of submission to God; how important is it, that this subject be well in-

vestigated. We are therefore, in this Essay, led to a discussion of two points. 1. The nature, and, 2. The obligation of submission to God.

I. With regard to the nature of submission to God, it implies, a knowledge of his real character. Without a knowledge of the divine character, how can we decide whether we submit to the true God, or to a false god? The Athenians were reprov'd by the Apostle for making their submission, and paying their adorations to an *unknown God*. Their ignorant worship was unacceptable to the true God. Without a distinct knowledge of *Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being*, it is impossible to exercise that submission, which will meet his divine approbation. How can a man know whether he is submissive to the civil government, unless he understands the nature of the government, and the character of the rulers?

Again; The command, by the Apostle, "Submit yourselves, therefore, unto God," implies, that in our natural state, we are unsubmitive, and rebellious. Respecting natural men, it is said, that they have "a carnal mind, which is enmity against God; not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Concerning the Saviour, they say in their hearts, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Submission has respect to government; and we know that nothing is more abhorrent to the natural heart, than the government of Jehovah. Mankind are unreconciled to the law of God: but, to his holy sovereignty they are as inveterate, as they are to the dominion of the most absolute and arbitrary despot.

We hence observe further, that there can be no submission to God, without a change of heart, and a cordial return to God, by unfeigned repentance. Nothing is more absurd than to suppose, that a proud, impenitent sinner can be submissive to the holy law and government of God. He may yield, in sullen silence, to unavoidable evils: but this is not of the nature of submission to God. To lay a foundation for true submission, he must be a humble penitent; a real christian.

We further observe, that submission to God implies, not only a penitent and humble heart; but a most joyful acquiescence in the humiliating plan of salvation by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, it implies

a true and living faith. To have faith and confidence in God, is nearly the same thing as true submission: it is, at the least, absolutely essential to submission.

Furthermore; It is no small part of submission to God, that we yield a cheerful obedience to all his commands and institutions. It is vain for people to imagine, that it belongs to them to decide respecting religious duty, what is right, and what is wrong. And though many things which are required, seem mysterious; and to our scanty view, unreasonable; yet we must submit as cheerfully to the divine requirements, as to the events of divine providence. To obey God's commands, in all their strictness, and constantly to walk in his ordinances, is extremely burdensome to sinful men. But, in order to be submissive to God, this burden must be cheerfully borne—this cross must be taken up, and accounted a great and precious privilege.

Another thing, in which submission to God is exercised, is, that, generally speaking, it implies self-denial. In other words, it implies *something submitted to God*; some private good is relinquished, and very cheerfully relinquished.

It does not indeed suppose, that we are indifferent to our own interest and happiness; and regardless of our own welfare, and that of our families and friends. But it supposes, that we hold every thing at God's disposal; and that, be our own interests and connections ever so dear to us, we are willing to resign them all to the wise and sovereign disposal of our Almighty Father. It supposes, that our will and affections are brought into a sweet and cordial subjection to the will of God. "Not my will, but thine be done." True submission implies, that we have such a strong confidence in God, and in the wisdom and holiness of his government, that we choose decidedly, and at all events, that God should do his pleasure with us and ours; and with the whole universe. The submissive heart resigns up every thing, that God demands. Does he demand all our property? It is granted, even though it go into the hands of swindlers. Does he demand a son, a daughter, a husband, a wife? "Amen," says the submissive heart. Submission is a resignation, a chosen, cordial resignation, of every thing that we possess; and finally, a resignation of *ourselves*, soul and body, for time and eternity.

Another thing required, in the great duty of submission

to God, is, that it be *unconditional*. The language of the submissive heart, is not, "I will submit in hopes of obtaining divine favour: but I do submit, at all events; and without condition or reserve." "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." I claim no favour at all; nor is it a question, whether, by submitting to present evils, I shall escape future and greater evils. But, having confidence in the wisdom and rectitude of his government, *I now submit to God*. "Here I am, a hell-deserving creature. Do with me as seemeth thee good." This is the language of humble and holy submission. It is wholly unconditional; and it is never, in any case, to be retracted. It approves of the justice, as well as of the mercy of God.

II. We are to attend to the *obligation* of submission to God. Obligation, in this case, arises from several considerations. It arises from the infinite dignity and holiness of the divine character. To rebel against such a God, is to oppose the welfare of the universe. The absolute supremacy of God is as necessary to the welfare of the universe, as the supremacy of parents is to the welfare of their families. All can feel the force of the command addressed to children: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." This is essential to the general good. It is right, because parents are superior to children, and seek their good; and because children necessarily depend on the wisdom and direction of their parents, to guide them in the way of safety and prosperity. But men are far more dependent on God for wisdom and direction, than children can be on their parents; and God is possessed of infinitely greater dignity and holiness, than earthly parents. Submission to God, therefore, is infinitely more important than submission to men of any rank or character. In a monarchical government, and especially under the reign of the wisest and best of kings, absolute submission is required of all the subjects. Why not under the reign of the King of kings? Especially since it is clearly proved, that he is possessed of every divine perfection. Further,

We are under the same obligation to yield an unconditional submission to God, as we are to perform any duty whatsoever. For, in attending to the nature of submission, and what things are implied in it, we have found, that it implies repentance, faith, obedience to the law of God, and even the sum and substance of religion. Refusing

submission to God, therefore, is rejecting the duties of religion in general. Indeed, most of the duties of practical religion are qualified by a spirit of humble submission. What is repentance and sorrow for sin? unless it be qualified by a humble submission to God. Without submission to God, how is it possible to have faith in Jesus Christ? Of what avail are unsubmitive prayers, confessions, or praises? How can we adopt, with an unsubmitive heart, the form of prayer, dictated by the Saviour: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven?" A humble submission to God, and nothing short of this, qualifies the heart for the service of God.

Again; The duty of submission to God, is one of the clearest dictates of reason, and the light of nature. It receives the approbation of every enlightened conscience. And a hearty compliance with this duty, produces the greatest peace and tranquility of soul. It is a balm to the afflicted and desponding christian. It gives glory to God, under the sharpest afflictions, and the most bitter reproaches. All are viewed as coming from the hand of an infinitely wise and holy sovereign. All are improved to mend the heart, as well as to glorify God. He who is submissive in heart, relies on the blessed promises of God; and trusts in his faithfulness. He believes, that God will for ever glorify his great name; and cause, even *the wrath of man to praise him*. He believes, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God," and are submissive to his holy will. Most gratefully, and joyfully, therefore, does he acknowledge his obligation to submit himself to God. He would not desire to dictate, even the smallest matters, relating to himself. He trusts in the Lord with all his heart, and leans not to his own understanding. "Blessed is the man that thus trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."
....AMEN.



ESSAY XXIV.

Prayer and Praise.

"**L**ORD, *teach us to pray.*" To this most important request, the Saviour was very attentive; and the statement which he made, in reply to it, deserves a place at

the head of every treatise on the subject of prayer. It is as follows. "Luke xi. 1—14. And it came to pass as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day, our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them; which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: For a friend of mine, in his journey, is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

What an illustrious sketch, or outline of the various topics, belonging to the duty of prayer! The Lord Jesus, fond of giving all needful instruction, on a subject so important, not only taught his disciples the subject matter, but also the manner and spirit of prayer. He also stated, by a striking similitude, the importance of importunity and perseverance in prayer, and the assurance of a gracious answer. All these things are contained in this noted passage of instruction on the subject of prayer. According to this lesson of instruction, we find that it is to be addressed, most respectfully and devoutly, to our heavenly Father, who is the supreme Lord of the universe; and

the great benefactor of the children of men. Prayer itself consists in lifting up our hearts and desires to God, in the name of Jesus Christ; first of all, for the displays of his glory; and also for all things desirable in themselves; with a most humble and unreserved submission to his holy will.—Accordingly, having devoutly addressed the Father of mercies, the first petition is “*Hallowed be thy name.*” —Let thy great and holy name be honoured and glorified for ever. The second petition is, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.” In this is contained a devout supplication for the accomplishment of all the gracious promises, respecting the glory and triumph of Christ’s kingdom on earth. It is a petition, that the earth may be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord; and may, in some good measure, resemble the heavenly state. The third petition is expressive of absolute dependence on God for a supply of our daily wants: “Give us day by day, our daily bread.” Give us, daily, a competency of the necessaries of this life, and hearts therewith to be content. The fourth petition is for the forgiveness of our sins. “And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” In this we are taught to exercise a forgiving temper; and we seem not to be allowed to ask God to be merciful, on any other condition than this, that *we also be merciful.* “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also in heaven may forgive your trespasses.” To ask forgiveness of God, implies a sense of sin and guilt; and to ask it on such a condition, implies great humility of heart; and in this consists the chief excellency of prayer.

The fifth petition, in this comprehensive prayer, is, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” To deprecate temptation, and all natural evils, is as proper, and as important, as to pray for the blessings of nature, or of divine grace. Conscious of the numberless temptations and evils to which we are exposed, and under which we labour; how important is the privilege of access to God, even to the throne of his grace, to present our humble plea in the name of Jesus Christ, for all needed succour and deliverance!

Finally; The example of prayer before us concludes as it begins, with ascriptions of glory to God. “For

mine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever, Amen." This is the general instruction given us by the Saviour, on the great duty of prayer: and the example before us is so comprehensive as to reach, more or less distinctly, every important occasion.

Having considered the nature and spirit of prayer, as they are exhibited by the Saviour, in his example and instructions to his disciples; we proceed, according to the noted passage quoted as a theme, from the 11th of Luke, to a view of the importance of *importunity* in prayer. The friend that made application at midnight, for three loaves, was successful, only by his importunity. His importunity was far more availing than his friendship. Be importunate at the throne of grace, day and night, and on all occasions; be "*instant* in prayer; pray without ceasing; pray with all perseverance, abounding therein with thanksgiving;" and you shall succeed. Christ, by another parable, urged, in particular, the importance of importunity in prayer. "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" saying "There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not, for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet, because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Perpetual application to the Father of mercies, pleading, with submission, for needed blessings, and praying for the prosperity of Zion, must be an acceptable sacrifice to God. We need not hesitate to pray, every day we live, for the same important blessings. How can we too often repeat the Lord's prayer? How can we be too importunate in pleading for the revival of religion, and for the conversion of Jews and gentiles? Importunity is the life and beauty of prayer.

We come now to the concluding part of the noted instructions of the Saviour, on the duty of prayer. These instructions conclude with strong assurances of being

heard ; and of being accepted and answered. “ And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “ For every one that asketh receiveth.” There is no exception in this case. Not a faithful prayer was ever left unanswered. A special characteristic of Jehovah is, that He *heareth prayer*. “ O thou that hearest prayer ! unto thee should all flesh come.” *To hear*, in the emphatical sense, is to answer and do accordingly. When the Saviour said to the Father, “ I know that thou hearest me always ;” the meaning was, that his prayers were answered. That all faithful prayers are abundantly answered, is evident from scripture promises, declarations and facts. “ Ask, and ye shall receive,” is a repeated promise. “ Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it.” God promises to give the Holy Spirit, that most gracious gift, *the unspeakable gift*, to them that ask him. The promises are particular, with respect to social prayer. “ If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask ; it shall be done for them, of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” From this we may conclude, that associations for special prayer, particularly for the revival of religion, and for the increase and enlargement and purity of the church, are pleasing to God, and are often found to be presages of a work of divine grace.

A very great part of the importunate prayer of Christians has respect to the divine promises ; and in praying for their fulfilment, there is the utmost assurance of being heard and answered. All the blessings promised in the covenant of redemption, and in the covenant of grace, are proper subjects of prayer, and will be granted in answer to special fervent prayer. The glorious Millennium of the church, which is fixed and established by the divine decree, will never take place, but in answer to fervent prayer. The glorious restoration of God’s people foretold by the prophet Ezekiel, is strongly confirmed ; “ I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.” Yet, saith the Lord, “ I will be enquired of, by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” All divine and special bless-

ings are in answer to the prayers of the upright, which are God's delight. Hence the only assignable reason why any *ask and receive not*, is, because they *ask amiss*, that they may consume it upon their lusts. It is on the ground of God's always hearing the prayer of the faithful, that it is said, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Not that the immutable Jehovah is swerved from his purposes, by the efficacy of prayer; but that he has wisely connected his purposes with the fervent prayer of his saints. It was the eternal purpose of God to visit the house of Israel, for the wickedness of Ahab, with a severe drought; and afterwards to grant a sudden and plentiful rain. But the drought and the rain were according to the prayers of the prophet Elijah. "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth, by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Hearing the prayers of Elijah was not the only instance, in ancient ages, of God's hearing and answering the prayers of his saints. Jacob wrestled in prayer at Bethel, and obtained the blessing; and with him the covenant of grace was established. Moses was heard, at all times, when he interceded for the rebellious people; and by prayer he appeased the divine anger; and as a mediator, led the Israelites to the borders of the land of Canaan.—When Moses held up his hands in prayer, Israel prevailed in battle; but when he let down his hands, so that the visible appearance of prayer ceased: then Amalek prevailed. At the word of Joshua, who was a man of prayer, the sun and moon stood still; the solar system suspended its revolution, till the victory in battle with the Amorites was completed. David and Solomon had great experience of God's answers to prayer. At the dedication of the temple, the cloud of glory, which was the symbol of the divine presence and favour, filled the house; and the Lord afterwards, expressly said to Solomon, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication which thou hast made before me." Hezekiah was remarkably heard, in his short and fervent prayer, when Jerusalem was invaded by the Assyrians. An angel of the Lord slew, in one night, a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian

army, and broke up the siege. Nehemiah, rebuilt the temple and city of Jerusalem, more by his prayers, than by his own strength, or the strength of his labourers. The restoration of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon, was by the special prayers of Daniel. Encouraged by the prophecies, "He set his heart to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." His prayers were full of importunity; and they were remarkably heard, approved, and answered. The deliverance of the Jews from captivity, was as much in answer to the prayers of Daniel, as if his prayers had been the sole cause of their deliverance. "At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth," said Gabriel to Daniel, "And I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved."

God never bestows any great and special favours on his people, but in answer to particular and fervent prayer. But such prayer is never made in vain. The prayers of the New Testament saints were as remarkably heard as those of the more ancient saints. Jesus Christ, in his religious devotions, acted in the capacity of a man; and in his prayers, he was always heard. His disciples and followers, who were daily of one accord, after his ascension, praying for the accomplishment of his gracious promises, were heard and answered abundantly, on the day of Pentecost and afterwards. When the Apostles and brethren, on a special occasion, were united in social prayer, and lifted up their voice with one accord to God; "the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." When Peter was bound in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church, unto God for him." And in the very hour of their nocturnal devotions, he was rescued, by an angel from heaven. Paul and Silas, in close confinement, were miraculously delivered by an earthquake at midnight, in answer to their prayers and praises. And in answer to their prayers, the Jailor and his household were converted and baptized. By prayer, Paul was delivered from the shipwreck; and, for his sake, the whole crew were saved from a watery grave. Instances of God's hearing prayer are so numerous, that it is unnecessary to quote them all, to prove that God always hears and answers the prayers of the faithful; and

in general, he grants the very things which are asked for. In many instances, however, Christians may sincerely and fervently pray for things which God, in his wisdom may see fit to withhold, and grant them even richer blessings, as a substitute. All we contend for, in the present discussion, is, that *always*, and in his own way, God hears and answers the prayers of his people; and when they are more particularly excited to union and fervor in this important duty, the answer is more particular. When the people of God are excited, by the Spirit of God, to pray for rain, God sends them rain. When they unitedly plead for the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is given. Revivals of religion are generally the effect of union and importunity in the prayers of the saints. These are the source of every good and perfect gift of God. When God delivers his people from pestilence, war, or famine, it is by prayer; by prayer he will accomplish all his promises; and ultimately, he will fill the earth with his glory.

REMARKS.

1. Although Christ was very particular to enjoin on his followers, both by precept and example, the important duty of secret prayer; yet he was equally particular and strenuous with regard to the various branches of social prayer. The example which he gave to his disciples, was an example of social prayer. It is expressed in the plural number; "*Our Father, who art in heaven.*" This is pertinent to every branch of social prayer, but not to individual prayer. Another branch of social prayer, urged and enforced by the Apostle Peter, is that of *the family*. Admonishing husbands and wives to the mutual discharge of their social and relative duties, he exhorts them "to live, as being heirs together of the grace of life, *that their prayers be not hindered;*" plainly alluding to the most important, and indispensable duty of *family prayer*. To no other society, but the family, can these words have any proper application. The fellowship of christian husbands and wives is most intimate and endearing. But how can this be promoted to advantage, without daily union in prayer? If, in the families of christians, to whom Peter wrote his epistle, there had

been no social prayer ; then, certainly, there were no prayers of husbands and wives, which were liable to be hindered.

On the whole, it appears, that, in every community, social prayer is the life and nerve of religion ; and especially in families, which are the nurseries of all civil societies. Without family worship, how can parents bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ? And how can their children be impressed with the idea that their parents give themselves to prayer ?

Not only in families, but in all other communities, and on many occasions, social prayer is essential to the christian character. On the holy sabbath in particular, all the friends of Christ are of one accord in the house of prayer and praise. In the sanctuary, their devotions are enkindled into a holy ardour : and were it consistent with duty in general, they would “ desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of their life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.” Very cordial is the fellowship of real christians, in the house of prayer. Other days and seasons, besides the Sabbath, are set apart for special humiliation and prayer : and those who disregard these institutions, which are of human authority, discover a spirit of rebellion against the authority which is divine. “ From evening to evening shall ye celebrate *your sabbaths,*” as well as the Lord’s sabbaths.

Seasons of affliction, distress and mortality, are proper seasons for special union and concert in prayer. The example of Christ was, that, “ in all the afflictions of his people, he was afflicted.” Benevolence requires, that we unite with the afflicted, especially in humiliation, and social prayer.

Another special occasion for social prayer is, when christians are excited by the Holy Spirit, to set apart short seasons for prayer, and religious conference. By these special meetings for prayer, and religious improvement, the life of godliness is promoted, and the Lord is well pleased. “ Then they that feared the Lord,” says the prophet, “ spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it ; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord,

and that thought on his name." Scarcely any part of religious improvement is more useful and important than these voluntary associations for prayer and praise, and holy conversation. How often are they attended with the happy fruits of divine grace, in the conviction and conversion of sinners, and in the edification of the saints!

2. In connection with the duty of prayer, and as a part of it, a few remarks may be useful, on the duty of *singing*, as well as speaking the praises of the Lord. "Is any merry? let him sing Psalms." All the Psalms and songs, and poetical books, which comprise a great part of the Bible, were divinely inspired, for the important purpose of singing praises to the Lord. Singing the praises of the Lord, has been a very pleasing and useful part of religious and social worship in the church of God, probably from the beginning of the world; commencing in Paradise. And "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith the Lord. Where true love to God, and cordial fellowship with the saints exist in the heart, they are greatly cherished and promoted, by the aid of sacred melody. By this exercise of religious devotion, David was excited to raptures and transports of joy. It was also a devout and delightful exercise of the Saviour and his disciples. In this they united, at the first celebration of the sacramental supper. And in this, the church has always persevered. The Apostles, by example and precept, have urged the duty of singing God's praise. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight, bound in the inmost prison, and mangled with stripes. No situation on this side of the infernal world, is too deplorable for such men to sing the praises of the Lord. David resolved to sing his praises, *while he had a being*. Paul having exhibited to the Hebrews, Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest of their profession, says, "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." In the view of the Apostle, it appears, that vocal music, has the preference. This is the *kind* of music with which the heavens resound for ever. "But who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?" Our duty is to praise the Lord with all our might; and to praise him for all his works, whether of mercy, or of righteous judgment. So impor-

tant was the praise of God, in the Saviour's view, that when the little children sung Hosannas in the temple, at his triumphant entry, he declared, "that if these should hold their peace, the stones, even the stones of the temple would immediately cry out."

3. In a review of what has been said, on the subjects of prayer and praise, we perceive, that they are very humble and devout exercises of heart. They look above all selfish considerations: for their object is in the highest heavens. God is the supreme object, and his glory is the leading motive of all sincere and pure devotion. Confidence in the divine government, and in the divine promises, are the mainspring of prayer and praise. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer! unto thee shall all flesh come." "Rejoice evermore: Pray without ceasing: In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, concerning you."....AMEN.



ESSAY XXV.

Duties of the Unregenerate, and the Means of Grace.

ON the practical part of the system of divine truth, we have briefly considered the duties of self-denial and true benevolence—of humility and submission to God; and of prayer and praise. While it is granted by all who profess to believe the holy scriptures, that these duties are highly incumbent on every christian; and are essential to the christian character; yet, with many, it is a very interesting inquiry, whether these, or any other religious duties, are incumbent also, on impenitent, and unconverted sinners? On this point the scriptures speak a language, which, in the view of many, is awfully forbidding. The scriptures declare plainly, "that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, *inasmuch* as they bring it with a wicked mind." This is said to be the correct translation. Again it is written, by way of contrast, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is

his delight." And again, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." The meaning of all these declarations appears to be one and the same; that a wicked man, or an impenitent sinner, does not, in any measure, offer to the Lord acceptable sacrifices. Proceeding from a selfish heart, and being performed with no regard to the glory of God, nor to the good of his kingdom, they are *vain oblations*; and the command of the Lord is, "Bring no more vain oblations." Your offering of incense, however precious, is an abomination. External devotions, without the concurrence of the heart, are mere hypocrisy, which is considered as one of the baser kinds of iniquity. The bible appears to testify strongly against the external duties and religious services of impenitent sinners. Sinners, however, do not see fit to renounce all the external duties of religion. In many duties, they are constant and persevering. In external devotions, especially the devotions of the sanctuary; in the observance of the holy sabbath; in reading the scriptures, and attending to the gospel ministry, statedly and occasionally; and in attending the variety of meetings for prayer and religious improvement; sinners seem to go, almost hand in hand, with the saints. They embrace, and defend the doctrines of the bible; and "*Almost they are persuaded to be christians.*" Many, who make no profession of religion, statedly attend to the external performance of family worship, and the religious instruction of their children; well knowing, that these things are matters of infinite importance to their dear children, as well as to themselves. It would be extremely difficult to restrain the greater part of the people from attending, more or less, to the external duties of religion. Their consciences, their hopes, and their fears prompt them to many such duties. But from the word of God, we are assured, that all these external duties and sacrifices of the wicked, are an abomination to the Lord; because they are performed with a wicked mind, or a selfish heart. "God looketh on the heart." And the heart being corrupt, the motives of the gospel are perverted. Not only the religious sacrifices of the wicked, but all their moral actions, of every name and nature, are corrupted, and are an abomination to the Lord. All their deeds of jus-

tice, of mercy and charity, proceeding from a wicked mind, are perfectly odious in the sight of a holy God. For, it is written, and testified, of all the wicked, that “every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually.”

The interesting question is now fairly introduced; *Is it the duty of impenitent sinners to pray? or to attempt the performance of any religious duties?*

Previous to giving a direct answer to this question, it must be admitted fully, and without any reserve, that the sacrifices, and all the religious duties of the wicked and impenitent, are, indeed, an abomination to the Lord. To attempt to construe away the plain sense of the scriptures, which have been introduced in confirmation of this truth, is a vain attempt. No reasonable and candid man will undertake this thing. It ought to be realized by all the impenitent and unregenerate, that, in their best duties, their hearts are totally corrupt, and their external services flowing from such fountains of corruption, are, according to the letter of God's word, *an abomination to the Lord*. “With their mouths, they may shew much love;” and with their hands, they may perform many deeds of charity; “but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” Sinners are not only covetous, but carnal: and “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Solomon goes so far as to say, “The *thoughts*, or designs of the wicked are an abomination.” Truly, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

To say, as some do, that sinners can perform the *matter* of their duty acceptably, though the manner and spirit of it may be ever so defective, is grossly absurd. For the manner and spirit of duty constitute it what it is. In these consists the essence of duty. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” All worship but this is an abomination. Sinners who have gone the whole circuit of external duties, during the longest life, ought not to imagine, that, in a single instance, from first to last, they have ever performed one duty acceptably in the sight of God.

But notwithstanding all this, the answer to the question before us must be in the affirmative. Unregenerate sinners ought to pray always, with all prayer and supplication: They ought to abound in secret prayer, and per-

severe therein. They ought to attend constantly to the religious devotions in the sanctuary, and to all other appointments for social prayer and praise. They ought to neglect no branch of religious worship, nor of religious instruction. They ought to keep God's sabbaths, and to reverence his sanctuary. If they are heads of families, they ought to maintain the worship of God in their houses, according to the divine requirement, and the practice of the saints, in all past ages and generations. Those who neglect the morning and evening sacrifices, and prayer and thanksgiving at their tables, give sad evidence of a reluctance of heart to the duty of prayer. But let sinners be ever so conscious to themselves, of a hard and wicked heart, yet this is no excuse; but, on the other hand, it should serve as a stimulus to religious sacrifices; especially to the sacrifices of a broken heart, and a contrite spirit. A hard and impenitent heart is no more excuse for the neglect of religious duty, than sloth and indolence are for the neglect of ploughing and sowing.—And we read, that, “the ploughing of the wicked is sin.” But how is this sin to be avoided? Shall a sinner be advised, on account of his indolence, or on any account, to cease from ploughing? We ought, indeed, to inform the wicked, as we have opportunity, that their ploughing and planting, and all their labours and occupations, are sin, and abomination; inasmuch as they perform them all, “with a wicked mind.” The divine requirement is this, “Whether therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” In all our selfish pursuits, therefore, we commit an abomination. But how shall we remedy the evil? And how is this command of God, to do all things to his glory, most wickedly and perversely violated? Is it by doing all things required of us with selfish views? or by stubbornly refusing to do them at all? Certainly, by stubbornly refusing to do them at all. The same is true, respecting prayer and religious sacrifices. No state of sin and guilt, however aggravated, affords the least excuse for the neglect of prayer, or any other religious duties. The same holy religion, which God requires of the best of saints, he also requires of the vilest of sinners. And their most invincible habits of wickedness afford not the least excuse. “God now commandeth all men every where to repent.” But if the externals of religion are

neglected, we may be assured, that the internals of it are equally neglected. He, therefore, who dissuades sinners from the external duties of religion, on the ground of their being an abomination to the Lord; does essential injury to the cause of truth and holiness. Every man, who has access to the word of God, be his state and character what they may, finds himself exhorted and commanded to pray without ceasing; and to attend, strictly and perseveringly, to every branch of religious duty.

The sacrifices of no people, perhaps, were ever a greater abomination to the Lord, than those of the scribes and pharisees. But Christ did not condemn them for their external duties, when they were agreeable to the letter of the law; he condemned them only for the depravity of their hearts. "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. For ye pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin; but have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Thus the matter appears to be clear, that we need not hesitate to enjoin on all men the external duties of religion; be their past and their present character, ever so ~~vile and abominable~~. Persuade sinners to pay a sober and constant attention to every duty of religion; and, to say the least, you do much to mend their morals, and the morals of the community. And you do more; you open to them a hopeful prospect of a saving conversion; not by any amendment of their hearts; but by their being brought more under the influence of God's usual means of conversion. Should all the serious people among us, by their united exertions, persuade the wicked around them to attend strictly and soberly to the external duties of religion; who would regret the visible reformation? Who would go about to urge, as an objection, that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord? Is it not a consolation to all the followers of Christ, to hear that family religion, in particular, is soberly attended, in any one house, where it has been heretofore neglected? Christians greatly rejoice in observing one and another, who have been negligent and despisers of religion, aroused to attention to the important duties of the holy sabbath, and of the sanctuary. They labour abundantly to persuade all people to attend public worship, and the preach-

ing of the gospel; believing, *that it pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, as men proudly call it, to save them that believe.* To those who shun and despise the special means of grace, there is, evidently, no prospect of salvation. There is no hope of that conviction of sin, which, in the economy of divine grace, usually precedes a saving conversion to God. And, almost invariably, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: even by the ministry of the gospel.

But when we say, that impenitent sinners ought to pray, and attempt the performance of all the external duties of religion; it is to be understood, and solemnly considered, that they ought to do all these things with sincerity of heart; with a supreme regard to the glory of God; and with a humble reliance on the merits of the crucified and exalted Redeemer, "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." To this holy and faithful discharge of all religious duties, sinners are under as great obligation, as the saints. Being impenitent sinners, is no more excuse for insincerity, and unfaithfulness to God, than it is for insincerity and hypocrisy, in the social duties which they owe to their fellow-men. They ought, in all their duties, whether to God or their neighbours, sacredly to regard the two great commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself." In every duty, they ought to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. If, by reflecting on all their past religious performances, they find, that they have been altogether void of holy sincerity; this should be with them a matter of deep sorrow and regret, and humiliation before God. But to refrain from religious duties, as a remedy for this greatest of evils, is absurd; and may prove fatal to the immortal soul. As well may a sinner refrain from his daily labour; because his labour, with a wicked heart, is an abomination to the Lord. However great the sin of unregenerate doings and duties may be; yet, to renounce all doings and duties, is certainly a greater sin. This is a remedy worse than the disease; and more pernicious in its effects.

It is further to be considered, that a regular attendance of the impenitent, as well as others, on the externals of religion, is highly important, and even necessary to the

welfare of society. How woful would be the state of human society, if none, but the few scattered and despised followers of Christ, paid any attention to religious duties! How deplorable would be the ignorance and sottishness of the great body of mankind, if, from their childhood, they paid no attention to the great subjects of religion!—no attention to the duties and institutions of the Sabbath!—no attention to the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ!—When people renounce the externals of religion, how soon do they become barbarians!

Now, therefore, even admitting that salvation depends on the power and grace of God; yet from scripture and universal observation, it is evident, that the grace of God, in the conversion of sinners, never extends beyond those means of grace, which are of his own institution and appointment. “Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth.” He, therefore, who despiseth the word of truth, shall be destroyed. “Being born again,—*by the word of God.*” Such is the darkness and blindness of the human heart, that a careful attention to the word of God is necessary to awaken the consciences of the unregenerate; and to prepare them to feel the need of a Saviour, and of the grace of the gospel. Dissuade all impenitent sinners from religious instruction, and they will go blindfold to final ruin. In the strictest sense they will perish for lack of knowledge. They will die without instruction; they will probably lead their children, and their dearest connections to the same awful ruin with themselves.

Reasons have now been offered, sufficient to establish the affirmative of the question. It is found, that sinners, at all events, and under all circumstances, ought to pray, and to attend solemnly to all religious duties. No excuse is to be admitted, on account of the wickedness of their hearts. If they feel their guilt, let them most heartily adopt the prayer of the publican; “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Let all sinners resolve in the fear of the Lord, that they will attend to the external duties of religion, feeling their sin and guilt, and their obligation to be holy in heart and life: And in human view, there is far greater probability of their conversion, than there is of the conversion of openly perverse neglecters and despi-

sers of religion. This greater probability arises, however, not from any thing morally good in their attentions and resolutions ; but from their being within the reach, and under the precious influence of the means of grace. The sinner who attends to the means of grace, is the most likely to discover the corruptions of his own heart ; and to feel a conviction of his sin and guilt. Even his attempts in duty, though his heart be ever so corrupt, may, in the hand of God, be made the means of his conversion.

As an inference from the decision of the question before us, it may be urged, by some, that the unregenerate, and impenitent sinners ought to attend to, and receive the sacraments of Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Why should they not be partakers of these special ordinances of Christ, as well as of the common ordinances and duties of the sanctuary ? Why may they not come to the table of Christ, as well as to the throne of grace in prayer ? Answer, 1. To come, with propriety, to the sacraments of Christ, a man must enter publicly, into covenant with God and his people ; and become a member of his visible church. For the celebration of the sacraments is a covenant transaction, expressive of holy fellowship and communion. Those who come to these ordinances must therefore be such as are denominated "holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling." As a prerequisite to these ordinances, they must profess the Christian faith ; and the sacraments are designed as testimonials of their faith, rather than the means, by which their faith is produced. Accordingly, we find, that circumcision was to Abraham, not the means of his faith, but a seal of the righteousness, or *acceptableness* of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised. Thus it is evident, that preparatory to the participation of the ordinances of Christ, there must be a profession of the true faith, and a public standing in the visible church of Christ. Answer, 2. Whilst Christ and his Apostles admitted none but visible Christian brethren and sisters, to holy fellowship ; they freely admitted and invited all, of every character, to all the other branches of religious worship and instruction. The commission of the Saviour to his Apostles was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Of course, all were required to attend to the preaching of the gospel ; and to the prayers and praises

in the sanctuary. Attending the common exercises of religious worship and instruction, has never been considered as a covenant transaction; and has never been restricted to the professed followers of Jesus Christ. We find sufficient reasons, therefore, why those who are excluded from the sealing ordinances of Christ, should be invited and commanded to attend to every other part of religious worship and instruction. If they find, by a retrospective view of their lives, that in all their attempts to perform religious duty, they have done nothing but abomination, let them not draw back unto perdition; but attend to the command of the Saviour, "Go, and sin no more."

REMARKS.

1. From this subject we learn, that the first and immediate duty of all sinners is repentance. The order of the duties which God requires, is distinctly stated by the Apostle; "*That men should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*" Sinners in general cherish the idea, that there are many preparatory steps, and good endeavours, by which they hope to come, by degrees, to the discharge of real christian duty. These preparatory measures, they consider as pleasing to God; though performed in a state of unregeneracy. This is a gross delusion. For without faith, which is a fruit of the Spirit, "it is impossible to please him." It is absurd to suppose, that, with a perfectly selfish heart, and with a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, sinners can read and pray, seek and strive acceptably to God; and so as to inherit the promises, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find." No such promises are made to the impenitent. To them are applicable the declarations of the Apostle James; "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts." Notwithstanding sinners ought to pray, and attend to every duty; yet they do nothing acceptably, nothing which entitles them to any of the promises, while in a state of impenitency. They make no advances, no progress towards a state of favour with God. Yea, they make progress in sin, and add daily to their guilt, until they begin to offer the sacrifices of a broken heart, and a

contrite spirit. Not all the terrors of a broken law, not the most pungent conviction of sin, not even the nearest approaches of death and hell, which excite their loudest cries for mercy, can produce any services which are acceptable to God antecedently to the exercise of sincere repentance. The sum and substance of all the sacrifices which are pleasing to God, and to which the divine promises are annexed, we have in the words of the Apostle Paul. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,"—"testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." All that precedes these, is of the nature of sin. The first commandment in the gospel is, "*Repent*;" and the next is, "*Believe the gospel*."

2. This subject, which requires both saints and sinners to attend most solemnly to the duties of religion; leads us to the proper idea of the use of means, in the work of man's salvation. The efficacious use of means, is only when God uses them with sinners; and not when sinners use them with themselves. The work of regeneration, conversion and salvation, is wholly a work of God; and with him it is optional, whether to perform the great work with, or without the use of means. The means of grace, which God uses with sinners, to bring them into his spiritual kingdom, are exceedingly various. His holy word, his sabbaths, the ministry of the gospel; and preparatory to all these, and perhaps the most successful of all means whatever, is *parental faithfulness*. It has been said, that the efficacious use of means is when God uses them with sinners. But God has a multitude of servants, acting in his name and behalf. Ministers, parents, magistrates, and christian neighbours. "*As though God did beseech you by us*," said Paul to impenitent sinners, "we pray you, *in Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God." God also makes use of all the various dispensations of his Providence, merciful and afflictive, as means of grace. He sometimes makes use of a man's own wickedness and folly, to alarm his conscience, and bring him to repentance. The means of grace, in the hands of the Apostles, being faithfully improved by them, constituted the *planting* and the *watering*; and God gave the increase. Speaking of regeneration, which is the very work of salvation, the Apostle considers it as being

wholly of God; and yet it was by the word of God. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God.*" Again, "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth."

Sinners do indeed attend to the means and motives of the gospel. Even infidels are excited to attend, and to learn the truth. And were not this the case, how could they ever be convicted and converted to Christ? But they never attend with a hearty approbation of divine truth; and with a desire to be holy. For they often cavil with the doctrines of salvation; and if they are overcome at last, it is by the exceeding greatness of the power of the Holy Spirit. These appear to be some of the scriptural ideas respecting the means of grace and salvation. This is God's general method of calling his elect into his kingdom.

On this important point, we may further observe; As respects those who live under the light of the gospel in particular, and perhaps, as respects all mankind, of adult age, the means of grace are represented in the scriptures, as being *necessary* to salvation. This doctrine appears to be stated and proved in the tenth chapter to the Romans. Here a general maxim is stated; "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To such is salvation limited, both in the Old and New Testaments. "But how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, without a preacher?" The conclusion is, "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing, by the word of God." And is it not a fact, verified by universal observation, that without the means of grace, none of the fruits of grace appear? No convictions of sin, no conversions are witnessed; no accessions to the visible church, none of the fruits of the Spirit; and in short, NO RELIGION. When God's ancient people forsook his word and ordinances, he declared, that they perished for lack of knowledge; and it is expressed, as a general truth, that, "Where there is no vision," no divine revelation, "the people perish." This is a truth obvious to us all. For who does not see, and deplore, the perishing state of the heathen? And who that has any latent spark of benevolence and compassion, does not feel the importance of

making every possible effort to spread the gospel throughout a perishing world? Inexpressibly important are the means of grace! By them, mankind are enlightened, and indoctrinated; so that, if they ever become the subjects of special grace, they are, at once, prepared for duty and usefulness. The means of grace, under the common influences of the Holy Spirit, keep alive some degree of conviction of sin, and some sense of the importance of real religion. They are also the principal barriers of civilization and morality. They therefore, claim the attention of all, however inclined the wicked are to pervert them to their own aggravated condemnation.

3. From this subject we learn, that for sinners to flatter themselves, that they are waiting and wishing for a spirit of prayer, and for converting grace, while they live in the neglect of all religious duty, and improvement, is a gross and dangerous delusion. They demonstrate, by their conduct, that there is no such wish in their hearts. The language of their conduct is, "I pray thee, have me excused." "I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." If, in the neglect of all duty, any flatter themselves that they love the brethren, and desire to become the subjects of divine grace; they confirm the testimony of the prophet, that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

4. No sinner is willing to be pronounced utterly inexcusable. The support and comfort of all sinners are their excuses. But excuse, in the neglect of duty, is an absurdity. Sinners in general, profess to be well disposed, and to do the best they can, hoping that God will enable them to persevere. Thus the blame is cast on God. And instead of doing their best, they do their worst. "Behold thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst."

Finally. The consideration of this subject ought to produce, at least, an amendment of morals. To this, there is no want of motives. To this no objection can be offered. In a depravity of morals, no one can dare to excuse himself. All profess to be advocates for morality. Happy would it be, if all should practice according to this profession! But, in fact, true religion and morality are inseparable; as appears by the noted ex-

hortation of the prophet ; “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy on him, and unto our God, who will abundantly pardon.”AMEN.



ESSAY XXVI.

The Holy Sabbath.

IN the whole system of practical subjects, none holds a higher rank, none claims a more profound attention, than that of the holy sabbath. The sabbath is to be *called a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable!* If, in point of importance, one command has the preference to another, the sabbath has the preference to all others. No other command is so abundantly repeated in scripture, nor expressed in terms so peremptory. “ Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep.” Still we are challenged, by some who profess the christian religion, to prove, that the law of the sabbath is in force, at the present day.— To prove this great practical point, we may attend to the following arguments.

1. That the church has a weekly sabbath established by divine authority, under the present dispensation of the gospel, as well as under all former dispensations, is evident from the scriptures. Heb. iv. 9. “ There remaineth therefore, a rest to the people of God.” The word, *rest*, is several times used in this chapter and its connections, and in every other instance, a Greek word is used which signifies rest in the ordinary meaning of the word. But here the Greek word is different, and is a word, strictly meaning *the holy sabbath*. “ There remaineth therefore, a sabbath to the people of God ; or to the christian church.” This text alone, proves distinctly, that the christian church has a sabbath, which *remaineth to them*. It is not a new institution ; but it is the essence of the original institution which remains, and will remain perpetually. In the verse next to the one quoted, we have a sufficient reason assigned, why a sabbath should remain to the people of God. “ For he that is entered into his rest,” that is, Jesus Christ, “ hath

ceased from his own work," that is, the work of redemption, "as God did from his;" that is, from the work of creation. God ceased from the great work of creation, and then appointed a day of rest, and sanctified it, as a holy sabbath. Christ likewise, ceased from the great work of redemption, and then appointed a day of rest, set apart, and remaining perpetually as a holy sabbath. There is no more obscurity or doubtfulness with respect to the establishment of the christian sabbath, than with respect to the establishment of the original sabbath. It is a holy sabbath which *remains*, and will remain to the people of God, so long as the resurrection of Christ is remembered and believed. The institution of the christian sabbath is, therefore, established on as firm ground as that of the original sabbath. Accordingly, to establish this important law, and to render it obligatory on all generations, we observe,

2. It was made a distinct article in the first table of the moral law, which was given to Moses, and proclaimed in the ears of the people at Mount Sinai. This was the law which Christ came to magnify and make honourable. As well may we expunge the first, or any other command from the sacred decalogue, as the fourth. To the ten commandments, our Saviour had particular reference, whenever he spoke of the law; and, on some occasions, he recited several of the commandments; "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother." Christ also was very careful, by his example, to enforce the observance of the holy sabbath. Can it be supposed, that, by his coming to fulfil all righteousness, he designed to abolish any one of the ten commandments? Certainly not. Our Saviour in his abridgment of the decalogue, reduced the ten to two great commandments. But did he, in his abridgment, aim to leave out, or exclude the fourth commandment? Had he found this to be a useless and unnecessary precept? Then his experience was contrary to the experience of all others. Had it been the will of God our Saviour, to abolish or repeal the law of the sabbath, it would certainly have been done, in the most explicit terms. No more doubt would have remained, than remains respecting the abolition of the ceremonial law.

3. Another argument in support of the law of the sabbath is, that no law or commandment whatever, appears to be so much insisted on, so often and so powerfully inculcated; and enforced with so heavy penalties, as the law of the sabbath. Old Testament and New set forth the infinite importance of the celebration of the holy sabbath. Well may we conclude, on this ground, that "there remaineth a sabbath to the people of God." And not only is the law of the sabbath urged more frequently, and more powerfully than any other law of God; but important reasons are assigned. One is, that it is a sign between God and his people. It is a test, or signal, by which the true church of God is distinguished from the ungodly world. On this ground, the law of the sabbath is most abundantly enforced in the holy scriptures. In the book of Exodus, we read, over and over, very repeatedly, "Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations; that ye may know, that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." "Ye shall keep my sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it, shall surely be put to death." Was the sabbath so infinitely important at that day; and was it to be kept for ever, as a perpetual statute, throughout their generations? How then can any one imagine, that it was a leading object, in the ministry of the divine Saviour, to abolish this holy statute? Reason revolts at the absurdity. This command, so much repeated in Exodus, is often inculcated by most of the prophets; and especially by the prophet Ezekiel, in his twentieth chapter. The following is a specimen: "I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them. And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know, that I am the Lord your God. Notwithstanding, the children of Israel rebelled against me; they walked not in my statutes—they polluted my sabbaths. Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them." It was particularly, for the profanation of the sabbath, that God punished his people with seventy years' captivity in Babylon. They were carried away, that the land, which had groaned under their avarice, *might enjoy her sabbaths*. This was solemnly recognized by Nehemiah, after the restoration from the

captivity, when the sabbath began again to be profaned. "And, he contended with the nobles of Judah, who began to profane the sabbath, saying; What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus? and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon our city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath day." Thus it appears, that the profanation of the sabbath was the capital sin, which brought on Israel national judgments; and which, in cases of individual transgression, was punished by an ignominious death. Only for gathering a little fuel on the sabbath, a man was, by the special command of God, stoned to death, by all the congregation.

Thus important was the law of the sabbath, in God's own estimation, in the ancient ages of the church. Nor is the importance of it at all diminished by the scriptures of the New Testament. It was unnecessary for the New Testament to be very copious, on a subject so abundantly established and enforced by the Old Testament. Barely to say and prove, that there remaineth a sabbath to the people of God, under the present dispensation of the gospel, is a sufficient confirmation of the law of the sabbath, down to the latest generation.

It may be added further, that, were the New Testament perfectly silent on the subject, yet reason and experience would decide whether the law of the sabbath is abolished. Reason and experience teach us, that the sabbath is as important now, as it has been in any past age of the world. It is important for the same purposes now, as it was in the antediluvian, Patriarchal, or Mosaic ages. "The sabbath was made for man;" and never did man stand in greater need of its restraints and its privileges, than at this day. Unless, therefore, we can find, in the New Testament, an express repeal of the fourth commandment; it is awful presumption to disregard the holy sabbath. From our daily observation, we have abundant evidence, that the welfare of civil and religious society depends, *chiefly*, on the due observance of the sabbath. The very form of the christian religion would be soon extinguished, if the sabbath were utterly discarded and profaned. Those who are regardless of the sabbath, are soon found to be equally regardless of all the commands of God; and of all the institutions of Jesus Christ. And in this case, does

not civil society languish, and rapidly decline to a state of heathenism? The importance of the sabbath is incalculable; and from this we are assured, that it is a divine institution, never to be abolished.

4. The law of the sabbath is no part of the Mosaic system of ceremonials; but is coeval with the creation of the world. It was the first law which was given to mankind in paradise; and beyond a doubt, will be in force to the end of the world. We have found, that the sabbath, as to its importance, is the first, and most distinguished of all the divine commands; and we may fairly conclude, that it will be the last to be set aside and abolished.

5. God's ancient people were required to keep his sabbaths, and *revere his sanctuary*. These two things were connected together, and the connection is inseparable. If, therefore, Christ had set aside the sabbath, the duties of the sanctuary would have ceased of course. There would have been no time nor place established for social worship and ordinances. Facts have proved incontrovertibly, that it is impossible to maintain, in a regular manner, the worship and ordinances of Christ; or to uphold the church in this wicked world, without a strict adherence to the law of the sabbath. Let every one be at liberty (a liberty which many claim) to sanctify, or to profane, the sabbath; and how few would be found to sanctify it? Even those professing christians, who now discard the sabbath, are dependent on the laws and customs of those who regard the holy sabbath, for the existence of their churches and their ordinances. Could they carry their point, to bring the established rules respecting the sabbath and the sanctuary into universal disrepute, they would speedily abolish all the regular administrations of the gospel, and expunge christianity out of the world. From these considerations it is evident, that the great Head of the Church, who is "Lord also of the sabbath," has established and will maintain it even to the end of the world.

Finally: That this great law is in full force, under the present dispensation of the gospel, is evident from many things contained in the history of Christ and his Apostles. Christ declared himself to be *Lord of the sabbath*. And the Apostle John was in the spirit *on the Lord's day*. The Lord's day, therefore, was the christian sabbath.

And this sabbath was evidently observed by John near the close of his very long life ; even late in the apostolic age. When Christ predicted the awful conquest of Jerusalem, he instructed his followers "to pray that their flight should not be in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." The sabbath was, therefore strictly regarded, near forty years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul, at Corinth, reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath day. How could this be done, if the sabbath had been long abolished ? At Antioch, Paul and Barnabas, having excited great attention by preaching one sabbath, it is said, "that the next sabbath, came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." The sabbath, it seems, was the day appointed and observed, as the day for religious worship, and the ministry of the gospel. At Philippi, where Lydia was converted, the Apostles tarried certain days ; and on the sabbath, they attended to the ministry of the word, and to the ordinance of baptism.

But why was any day called the sabbath day ? if the sabbath had been long abolished, by the authority of Christ. If all days are alike, why should the name *sabbath*, be found in the New Testament, except barely to inform us, that the fourth commandment is abolished. But enough, surely, yea, more than enough has been said, to put it beyond all doubt, and all controversy, that there is a christian sabbath, which is to be perpetuated to the end of the world. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God," which is typical of heaven ; and which is preparatory to that glorious state, where the weary are at rest ; and where their rest is glorious !

Having established the doctrine of the christian sabbath, and proved its perpetuity to all generations ; we now proceed to prove the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. This also, as well as the establishment and continuation of the christian sabbath, is decided, Heb. iv. 4. Mention is made in this verse, of the seventh day sabbath. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day, on this wise : And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." This was the rest from the works of creation. This seventh day was more or less regarded by the people of God, till after the work of redemption was finished upon the cross. Christ then having arisen from the dead, rested from his arduous work of redemption. This was one day of the

week following the day, in which God rested from the work of creation. It was, of course, the first day of the week. Then Christ ceased from his own work, and appointed the christian sabbath, as God had ceased on the seventh day, and appointed the original sabbath.

That there was, at the time of Christ's resurrection, a new day appointed, as the weekly sabbath, is evident from the fourth of Hebrews, in which the 95th Psalm is quoted and applied. "*Again* he limiteth a certain day, saying in David," or in the Psalms of David, "To-day, after so long a time, as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The day appointed, to hear the voice of God, by his ministering servants, and to attend social worship in his sanctuary, is the holy sabbath. And since *a new day was limited*; and since it is evident, that Christ arose from the dead, and ceased from the work of redemption on this *new day*, which was the first day of the week; it evidently appears, that this day is the christian sabbath.

That the sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, when Christ arose from the dead, is evident from the special observance and improvement of the first day of the week, for religious purposes. On this memorable day of the week, the disciples were assembled together, statedly and repeatedly, for religious purposes; and on these occasions they enjoyed the visible presence and favour of their Lord and Master. On the first day of the week, the Holy Ghost was given, at the feast of Pentecost; when three thousand were converted and baptized. On this day, the Apostles of Christ commenced their public ministry, and the church of Christ became a visible church. How great and astonishing were the transactions of *this first day of the week*! We read also that Paul with his fellow-travellers, on his last journey to Jerusalem, came to Troas, where he abode seven days; but no mention is made of a sabbath, nor of social worship and ordinances, till the first day of the week. But, on this memorable day, "The disciples came together to break bread," or to attend the sacramental supper. "And Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." Is it not evident, that the first day of the week was considered, by Paul and all that were present, as the christian sabbath?

Again; As has always been customary in the church,

the contributions for the poor, and for religious purposes, were made on the holy sabbath. But Paul, in his exhortation to the Corinthians on this subject, says; "Upon the *first day of the week*, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." We have now before us, sufficient evidence, that the first day of the week, which has been observed, as a holy sabbath, by the most correct and orthodox christians, of all denominations, from the day of Pentecost, is indeed, the christian sabbath.

Having proved the continuation of the sabbath; and its change from the seventh to the first day of the week; we proceed to consider some of the principal duties required; or how the sabbath is to be observed. And, in general terms, it is to be observed according to the true import of the fourth commandment. "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy." "In it thou shalt not do any work." Keep in mind constantly, that it is *the Lord's day*, and to be devoted to his service. The sabbath is to be a day of holy delights—better than a thousand days of worldly occupations, or carnal pleasures. The proper celebration of the sabbath, connected with the most precious promises, is beautifully stated by the prophet Isaiah. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight; the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—Here we find, that the law of the sabbath prohibits vain pleasure, as well as servile labour. Since common labour is forbidden, it is evident, that all worldly intercourse and conversation are forbidden. To converse on worldly topics, or to negotiate worldly business, is of the same general nature, as to labour for worldly profit and advantage. By the law of the Sabbath, are all vain and foolish amusements specially forbidden. According to the correct statement of the Assembly of divines, "The Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting, all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the

whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship ; except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy." Visiting, and party entertainments, however civil and friendly, are a gross violation of the fourth commandment. Visiting the sick and afflicted is often admissible ; but not merely as a saving of time ; but for the purpose of necessary assistance, and for holy conversation and prayer. In such cases, the Lord will have mercy, and not sacrifice. To attend to the arts and sciences, and every thing, not conducive to religious improvement, must be considered as sabbath breaking. But, of all the breaches of this holy command, none is more common, and none is more threatening to the moral interests of the community, than *journeying*. By this men not only involve themselves in guilt ; but they also involve many others in unnecessary cares and perplexities. Many must dispense with public worship to attend to *tavern concerns*. And they who attend religious worship, find it difficult to "wait upon the Lord, without distraction."

The religious duties of the Sabbath are meditation and prayer, holy conversation, attention to the holy scriptures, and other religious books ; and especially to the public and social worship of God, the ministry of the gospel, and the ordinances of Christ, in his sanctuary. These are enjoined as the duties of the Sabbath.

On attending the worship of God, and the ministry and ordinances of Christ in the sanctuary, the scriptures are peculiarly strenuous. "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord." On the sabbath, in ancient times, special offerings and sacrifices were brought to the sanctuary ; and a public reading and exposition of the holy scriptures were attended. There was a holy convocation, or calling together of the people to the place of the sanctuary ; and none were allowed, without the most satisfactory reasons, to absent themselves.

To accommodate the duties of the sabbath, sanctuaries are now erected, not at one particular place ; but all over the christian world ; and to neglect them, when they are so near to our doors, is, according to the New Testament as well as the Old, a capital crime. Hear the solemn language of the Apostle ! "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some

is ; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if ye sin wilfully, after that ye have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." All this terror is denounced against those who *forsake the assembling of themselves together*, on the holy sabbath. To do this, after we have received, clearly, the knowledge of the truth, seems to be considered as a fatal sin. A similar idea is expressed by David, and quoted by Paul.—“To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” *To-day*, as we have found, means the Christian Sabbath ; the special day, on which the voice of Christ, by his ministering servants, is to be heard in his sanctuary. Refuse to convene together, to hear the voice of gospel grace to-day, which is the Christian Sabbath, and your hearts will be hardened. You shall be greatly exposed to reprobation. The holy Sabbath is no ordinary day ; it is a day on which the hearts of sinners are generally hardened or softened. And, in fact, the symptoms of reprobation sometimes appear, in those who will not hear the gospel of Christ, in his sanctuary. Gradually, to every good work they become reprobate. They also become opposed to every article of the Christian faith.

To keep the Sabbath holy, is an important precept in the first table of the law, *in the first and great commandment*. And for those who violate this, there is no more hope, and perhaps less hope, than for thieves and murderers. For these violate only the second table of the law. Custom sanctions a thousand violations of the first table, more readily than one of the second table. Men may acquire and support a high reputation for virtue and honour, while they disregard, or oppose, all the commands and prohibitions of the first table of the law. They may deny the being of a God, or hold to a plurality of gods, or worship graven images, or take God's name in vain, or despise the holy Sabbath, with but little wound of reputation. But if they violate the commands in the second table of the law, they are loaded with reproach, and stamped with infamy. But “God seeth not as man seeth.” The murderer is indeed, a great sinner, and must surely be put to death ; but the Sabbath-breaker,

in the wilderness, was condemned to a death, most terrible and ignominious. How odious in the sight of God is the Sabbath-breaker? more odious than he is, who violates any, or all the commands in the second table of the divine law. All these a man may violate, and not be a reprobate. But we have found, that he who wilfully violates the law of the Sabbath, is greatly exposed to reprobation. Infinitely important is the duty of public worship and ordinances, on the holy Sabbath. We hence remark,

1. In a review of what has been said on the Sabbath, and its duties and privileges, Christians are comforted and animated. With great delight, they anticipate, through the medium of the earthly rest, the heavenly rest, where all labour and sorrow will cease for ever. O what a privilege it is to Christians, to live in a state of preparation for the eternal Sabbatism! But to obtain a good hope of the heavenly rest, much depends on the improvement of the earthly rest. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." He, and he only, who calls the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable, has an earnest of the enjoyments of heaven.

2. How unpleasant and gloomy must this subject be, to those who have no relish for the duties of the Sabbath! The Sabbath, being a type of heavenly rest, they can easily decide, that they have no taste for heavenly enjoyments. And if they have no satisfaction in such enjoyments as heaven affords, how can they hope for any final happiness? Ought not all to despair of any rest, till they begin to delight in the duties of the Sabbath, and of the sanctuary? If the Sabbath be irksome; if it be a weariness; if they say in their hearts, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great?" Their case is wretched indeed! it is almost hopeless. Surely, with this temper of mind, they cannot reasonably hope to enjoy that rest, which is the antitype to the holy Christian Sabbath: and which remains for ever....AMEN.

ESSAY XXVII.

The Ministry of the Word of God.

OF all the divine institutions, no one has been more perpetual, in all ages of the world, and no one has been more manifestly essential to the conversion and salvation of sinners, than *the ministry of the word of God*. By the word of God is meant all that system of instruction in revealed truth, which is contained in the bible, and is necessary to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, and of the way of salvation by a Mediator.

By the *ministry* of the word of God, is meant the preaching of the system of divine truth, by men who are set apart to this important work according to divine institution; even by men who "*are called of God, as was Aaron.*"

From the holy scriptures, and from universal observation, it is evident, that *the ministry of the word of God, and a faithful and persevering attention to it, are essential to faith and salvation*. This subject is illustrated particularly in the tenth chapter to the Romans; in which the previous doctrine is that of salvation by faith. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," or *justification*; "and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." For the scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Faith in Christ is stated as the only essential condition of salvation; and as being equally essential to the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is here taken for granted, that whosoever is a devout worshipper of the living and true God, is a true believer, and an heir of salvation. "How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed?" Nothing can be done acceptably, without the Christian faith. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." But further. "How shall they believe in him of whom they

have not heard?" We now come to the very point which establishes the main question; "*How shall they hear without a preacher?*" The hearing here mentioned, is limited in its meaning to the hearing of the ministers of the word of God. Without hearing the ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, how can there be a cordial reconciliation to God? "*How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?*" As it is written, "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*" that is, *by the ministry of the word of God.* This, according to all that goes before it in the connection, is the legitimate construction of the words. "*So then, faith cometh by hearing.*" The hearing, by which faith cometh, is the hearing of the faithful ministers and preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thus the proposition appears to be, in a great measure, established, *that the ministry of the word of God, and a faithful and persevering attention to it, are essential to faith and salvation.* This is God's appointed way of salvation. The Apostle Paul, in his salutatory address to Titus, his own son, according to the common faith, speaks of the manifestation of the word of God, and the success of the gospel, as being only *through preaching*; intimating, that without this, all other means of grace and salvation would be ineffectual. Accordingly he adds, "*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city.*" Elders were the ministers of the gospel, whose business it was, to preach the gospel; and without a faithful discharge of their duty, as the servants of Christ, there was no hope of the success of the gospel. The particular business of Paul, in his preaching, was *to plant*; and of Apollos, *to water*; and when these duties were faithfully discharged, "*God gave the increase.*" Faithful preaching of the word never fails of success. Looking forward to gospel times, the Lord says, by the prophet Isaiah, that "*As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower,*

and bread to the eater, so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth ; it shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Nothing is wanting, but a faithful ministry of the gospel, to ensure a glorious success to the cause and kingdom of Christ. "It came to pass in Iconium, that they" [Paul and Barnabas] "went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." This was the unfailing effect of a true and faithful ministry of the word of God. And this glorious effect is produced by *no other means*. Despise the preachers of the gospel therefore, (and truly they are but *earthen vessels*, having no sufficiency of themselves,) yet despising them you despise the most essential and necessary means of salvation. Call the preaching of the gospel foolishness, (and to them that perish, it is foolishness indeed,) yet it is seriously to be considered, that it pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, (as men impiously call it,) to save them that believe.

From the testimonies of scripture, which have been considered, it is evident, that although God produces the true Christian faith in the hearts of his elect, by the direct energy of his holy Spirit ; yet he sees fit to make use of certain means to produce it ; and especially *the ministry of the gospel of Christ*. This is indispensably important. As far as opportunity is presented, ministers must preach, and the people must hear the system of divine truth, or both must die in their sins, and perish in their unbelief, and unfaithfulness to Christ.

Further to establish this doctrinal proposition, it may be observed, (and it is sufficient to observe,) that God has, in all ages of the world, even from the days of Enos, down to this day, raised up and supported a succession of faithful preachers of righteousness ; by whose instrumentality, more than by any, and all other means, religion has been promoted. From the days of Enos down to the flood, we read of eight successive preachers of righteousness. Some of these, Enoch and Noah in particular, were greatly distinguished as prophets ; and all were preachers of righteousness ; all were *the messengers of the Lord of hosts*.

Let it now be seriously considered, what would have

been the state and character of fallen man before the flood, had there been no preachers of the word of God? In the posterity of Cain, we have a specimen of what mankind would do, without the preaching of the word. The earth was filled with violence and slaughter. Preachers before the flood were very few in number; perhaps no more than a succession of individuals. But, so great was their influence, under the blessing of divine providence, that the church of God was supported and perpetuated, for sixteen hundred years. Had there been no preachers, it is probable, that in less than half of that time, the human race would have been nearly exterminated, by their own violence, and ungodly lusts. Thus, in the earliest age of the world, it is found, that the salvation of sinners, and the support of the church, depended on the preaching of the word of God.

After the flood, God continued a succession of preachers, consisting of Patriarchs and prophets, down to the days of Moses. He appointed ordinances and institutions in his church, to prefigure and commemorate the great and glorious plan of redemption and grace, through the Mediator. The Patriarchs were constituted officers, to administer in holy things. The sabbath was, from the beginning, consecrated and set apart as a day of holy resting, and religious offerings and sacrifices to God. On this day the preachers of righteousness were more particularly employed to administer divine instruction. On this sacred day, especially under the law of Moses, double offerings and instructions were required. Abraham, who was the Patriarch and minister of God to his numerous household, received the sign of circumcision, which signified the cutting off of the sins of the flesh; and as a faithful minister of God, he not only instructed, but "commanded his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him."

Now considering what mankind were, in the patriarchal age, and what they are in every age; is there the least reason to suppose, that, without the stated ministry of the patriarchs, according to divine appointment, religion could ever have been promoted? Certainly not the least reason. All mankind would have sunk down in the most

sottish and fatal delusions, or would have mutually devoured each other with the sword. How could they have heard without a preacher? But, being furnished with preachers, qualified and commissioned of God to dispense divine truth; was it not the indispensable duty of all mankind, faithfully and perseveringly to attend to their ministry? Are they not bound to do this, at all times, on pain of final condemnation?

That God's ministers were always in duty bound most faithfully to preach the system of divine truth, is a given point. All the patriarchs, prophets and preachers of old, received a solemn charge to speak God's words at all events; and to declare all the counsel of God. As a specimen, we may notice the charge given to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, *Thus saith the Lord.* And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know; that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee; and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: *for they are most rebellious.*" This charge, solemn as it is, and difficult as it is to execute, applies to every minister of God, in every age of the world. At every ordination of a minister of the gospel, we hear the substance of this awfully solemn and weighty charge. And whose conscience does not readily decide, that all the ministers of God are bound, by the most sacred obligation, to fulfil this charge? Every minister must "*preach the word*, be instant in season, and out of season; he must reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." He must "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

In this view of the duty of the ministers of the word, let conscience decide, whether there be not equal obliga-

tion on all the sinful children of men, to hear and embrace the system of divine truth. Were they not bound, on pain of damnation, to listen, as for their lives, to the preaching of Enoch, and of Noah, of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? Did any person, who refused to hear these most ancient ministers of Christ, ever embrace the promised Saviour, by a living faith? Did not every one, who refused to hear them, live and die in his sins, and perish in his unbelief? Yes, most certainly. For neither in ancient nor modern times, has any other name been given among men, except the name of the blessed Redeemer, by which sinners can be saved. The antediluvian world, for refusing to hear and regard the warning voice of Noah, was overwhelmed in a universal deluge of water. "By faith Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." It is generally granted, and common sense decides, that obligation on the ministers of God to preach the word, at all events, implies equal obligation on all the people to hear. "Hear, and your souls shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing."

To render this duty still plainer, and the argument more conclusive, we may take a view of the ministry of Moses and Aaron, and their successors, during what is called the Mosaic dispensation of the gospel. Moses, being called by the voice of the Lord, from the burning bush at Horeb, and commissioned to go and deliver Israel, the chosen people of God, out of their bondage in Egypt; was sent to them in the character of a *preacher*. His first business was, to teach and instruct them, concerning the mind and will of God; and to lead them to embrace the promises made to their fathers. And, like all the faithful ministers of Christ, he carried his credentials with him. The people appeared to be convinced of the divine promises; and listened attentively to the instructions of Moses. "By faith they kept the passover," which was a token of God's sparing mercy to them, when he destroyed the Egyptians. By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned."

Now supposing the Israelites had thought it needless to

hearken implicitly to every word of instruction, encouragement, warning, and admonition, from the mouth of Moses, who was their minister; would they, in this case, have believed in God, and escaped from their Egyptian bondage? No. All the faith they had, whether speculative or evangelical, *came by hearing*. Had they not heard the messages of Moses, what had they to believe? and what to hope for? How could they escape from their bondage, and come to the possession of the promised land? Thus it appears, that, unless God's ministers are heard attentively, patiently, and perseveringly; it is impossible to possess the christian faith or the christian hope.

If we trace the ministry of Moses further, the result will be the same. For after the Israelites had proceeded to the foot of Mount Sinai, God descended in awful majesty on the Mount, and solemnly proclaimed the ten commandments, and wrote them on tables of stone. He also gave direction to his servant Moses to build a tabernacle for a place of religious sacrifices and instructions. The whole tribe of Levi was consecrated and set apart to the sacred priesthood: Aaron, the brother of Moses, being made high priest. This method of divine worship and instruction, being in a great measure new, was attended with a great variety of new rites and ceremonies; all of which were of divine institution, and made known to the people by God's servant Moses.—And were not the people required to attend strictly to all these institutions? Particularly, were not all the other tribes bound to pay their deference to the tribe of Levi, as being consecrated to the holy priesthood?—Were not all the other tribes required, without envy or grudging, to look to that of Levi, for religious instruction? What awful manifestations of divine wrath were made, in consequence of the rebellion of Korah and his confederates! Korah, and two hundred and fifty others, of the tribe of Reuben, princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face.” Anti-

icipating the event, he was filled with astonishment. The event was, that, in the presence of the congregation, "The earth clave asunder, and opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit; and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation." What an awful warning is this, to those who envy, hate and despise the ministers of the word of God? and who neglect the preaching and institutions of the gospel! Did Korah, or one of his confederates in rebellion, ever come to repentance, or to a saving faith in Christ? Or do any in ancient or modern times, who rudely invade the sacred priesthood, give evidence of that faith which the gospel requires? Is it not evident, from the view which we have taken of the sacred ministry, under the Mosaic dispensation, that *faith cometh by hearing?* and hearing by the *ministry* of the word of God? Our Saviour, in the time of his ministry, required of the Jews, that they should hear Moses and the prophets; and it is said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Hearing the ministry of the word of God, by Moses and the prophets, who were the divinely constituted preachers, under the Mosaic law, was evidently essential to salvation. Thus far, it has been by raising up, and supporting the ministry of the word, that true religion has been perpetuated. Had it not been for this, all mankind would have been long ago in a state of barbarous ignorance and idolatry.

Let us now bring down the inquiry to later times. When the Divine Saviour was about to make his appearance in the world, according to the prophecies, he was preceded by John the Baptist, who was supereminent as a *preacher*, and a messenger of God. As such he was foretold in the prophecy of Malachi. "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet," that is, one that shall come in the spirit and power of Elijah, "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

A great reformation, and revival of religion was to be effected by John the Baptist: and how was it to be effected? It was to be effected, simply by *the ministry of the word of God*. It was to be effected by what is called *the foolishness of preaching*. John did not even do a miracle, to give force and efficacy to his preaching. He solemnly rebuked and reprov'd the people, and called them to repentance. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent ye therefore, and believe the gospel." He taught the people the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; and vast multitudes followed him into the wilderness, eagerly listening to his preaching, and with one accord inquiring, "What shall we do?" He was, literally, according to another prophecy, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The success of his ministry exceeded that of any man who had gone before him. It is said figuratively, that "There went out to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins." Some, however, and even not a few, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." But all who came to his baptism, professing true repentance, and faith in the coming Messiah, were solemnly required to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; and not to begin to say in their hearts, "We have Abraham to our father; nor to rely on any thing, as an evidence of their justification, short of personal holiness, and union of heart to the promised Saviour. Such were the nature and effects of the ministry, of John the Baptist. Thousands of sinners were converted; and all the saints were edified. A far more glorious revival of pure religion was effected by his single ministry of the gospel, than had ever been witnessed before. But is it not evident, from the history of his ministry, that not a soul was converted, who had opportunity, but neglected to attend to his preaching? The infinite importance of the ministry of John, must be acknowledged by the candid world. But the *improvement* of his ministry was as important as the ministry itself. In this instance it was exceedingly manifest, that *faith came by hearing*, and by no other means.

Very soon after the commencement of the short ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ also made his ap-

pearance, as a minister of God to this fallen world. The substance of his doctrine was like that of his forerunner, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent ye, therefore, and believe the gospel."

For a full view of the ministry of Christ, the whole of the evangelical history must be quoted. A specimen or two only, will be exhibited. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Another specimen of the preaching of Jesus Christ may be taken from the same *sermon on the Mount*, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven."

Such was the doctrine and spirit of the preaching of Jesus Christ: and, "*Never man spake like this man.*" His pure system of morals was comprised in a few comprehensive points: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." "And all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." And finally; "if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

The ministry of Christ was not only attended with an irresistible influence on the consciences of men; but it was established by many incontestable miracles: and more than once, was there a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved son: *hear ye him.*" Many of the chief priests and scribes, however, refused to hear him. And was not the ancient prophecy of Moses verified in

their utter destruction? Alluding to the Saviour, the prophecy of Moses was, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among his people." Accordingly, those who refused to hear the Saviour's preaching, were soon overwhelmed in the destruction of their city and nation. "Then was their tribulation, such as had not been, from the beginning of the world, no nor ever shall be."

The Saviour did not, like John the Baptist, labour chiefly in desert places. But he declared, under trial before the high priest, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." Christ not only taught the people himself, and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God; but he employed above four score men to preach in his name; and in his name to work miracles. These he sent forth into every part of Judea; and gave them a solemn charge, that if any would not receive them, nor hear them, to shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them. These disciples and ministers of Christ, having performed the first part of their missionary service, *returned with joy*, saying, "Even the devils are subject to us through thy name." Irresistible was the influence of the Saviour, and complete was his success, in setting up, and establishing his kingdom, even though he was persecuted to the death of the cross; and made his way to the throne, through the valley of the shadow of death.

Thus, it appears, that, from the beginning of the world, down to the death of Jesus Christ, God never failed to support a succession of evangelical ministers, and preachers of righteousness. And by their means, the church has existed, and will exist to the end of the world.—And it has always been fatal to the best interests, and to the souls of mankind, to neglect their opportunities to hear the ministers of the word of God. While refusing to hear the ministry of the word, according to divine institution, sinners have seldom been convicted, and savingly converted to the christian faith.—*For faith cometh by hearing.*

Soon after our Saviour arose from the dead, he established his church under a new dispensation. He appoint-

ed new ordinances and institutions, more significant of the great subjects of grace and salvation. Great was the increase of light and privileges ; but not such as to supersede the ministry of the word. This, instead of being superseded, was greatly improved ; and was extended to all nations. Jesus Christ, before he ascended to heaven, solemnly delivered to his apostles, and through them, to the whole body of faithful ministers, in their successive generations, a commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." In other words, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded : and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

From this time forward, more evidently than before, faith was to come by hearing. Now, as far as possible, all nations and classes of people were to be furnished with the ministry of the word of God. All people, therefore, had they been disposed, might, long before now, have had opportunity to hear and embrace the gospel. Of the apostles and primitive ministers of the gospel, it is said, "Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world ;" meaning, at least, the whole known world ; or the Roman empire. In the time of the Apostles' ministry, preachers of the gospel were greatly multiplied ; and their object was, according to their commission, to preach the gospel *to every creature* ; well knowing, that *faith cometh by hearing*, and hearing by the administration of the word of God. From the history of the labours and sufferings of the first ministers of the gospel, it is evident, that the conversion of the world was their object ; and, that, according to divine appointment, the preaching of the gospel was the principal means to accomplish their object. And were not this the case, why all this provision of preachers ? If perishing sinners could, consistently with the plan and purpose of God, be converted from Jewish infidelity, or heathen idolatry, and be brought, by any other means, to the acknowledgment of the truth ; the labour and expense of preaching and hearing might have been saved. Had not the preaching

and hearing of the system of divine truth been essential to the salvation of sinners; would the ministers of Christ have been required to spend and be spent, to labour and suffer, and die in the cause? Certainly not. Many say in words, and many more in practice, that preaching is a traditional thing, a useless ceremony. It certainly is so, unless it be essential, in the plan of infinite wisdom, to produce the christian faith. But, that it is essential, we have abundant proof. It has, in all ages, been the principal means of salvation. Why do men plough, and manure, and sow, and plant their fields? Because there are no other means appointed to obtain a harvest. As no man ever gathered a literal harvest, without first sowing the seed; so no man ever gathered a spiritual harvest of precious souls, where no spiritual seed is sown. Scripture and observation testify abundantly, that among all who have proudly refused to hear God's preachers, but few have ever been found to embrace the Saviour, or to give the least evidence of religion. In most instances which can be named, where any evidence of the christian faith exists, it manifestly *came by hearing*, even by hearing the ministry of the word of God. Where opportunity for hearing is granted, hearing is essential to salvation.

Some indeed are so situated in life as rarely to have opportunity to hear, or to refuse to hear, the preaching of the gospel. Of such it may be said, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." He who has a benevolent and Christ-like temper of heart, shall inherit eternal life. But whoever neglects to hear, when opportunity is presented, will perish in unbelief. Hence the Apostle sounds an alarm in the ears of the Hebrews, in these words, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Thus we find, that forsaking the ministry of the gospel, after special awakening and illumination, is a strong symptom of reprobation.

INFERENCES.

1. Does faith come by hearing? then it is also *cherished* by hearing. Mankind then begin to realize the importance of the means of grace, when they begin to realize the christian faith. Would christians have their *faith grow exceedingly*, like that of the Thessalonians; let them attend constantly, and very strictly to the preaching of the gospel, and to the stated ministry of the word and ordinances of God. Other, and collateral means must also be improved; such as the study of the holy scriptures, prayer and serious meditation, holy and heavenly conversation, speaking often one to another of the great doctrines, duties, hopes and promises of the gospel.

But after all, it is probable, that the christian faith is cherished and increased by *sermons*, plain, solemn, pungent, discriminating sermons; more than by any and all other means whatsoever. "It certainly pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Faith is evidently not only begotten, but cherished by the ministry of the word of God. Every humble and believing heart, feeling its own weakness, ignorance and darkness, is in unison with him who cried out and said, with tears, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." The best external remedy for the unbelief of christians, is a constant, diligent, and prayerful attendance on the ministry of the gospel. To the most faithful followers of Christ, and those who are already strong in faith, the preaching of the gospel is a savor of life unto life.

2. Does faith come by hearing? Then, when we have opportunity to hear the preaching of the word, this must have the preference to all other means of grace. Nothing equals this, in point of importance. In this case, we are not at our option, whether to go to the place of hearing, or to sit down at our ease, and attend to some other means of grace. If we substitute something else, rather than to go up to the house of the Lord, to hear the dispensation of his word; we are like those who listened to the flatteries of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is *too much for you* to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which

brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Such is the nature of the christian faith, and of the christian institutions, that they can never admit of a substitute; any more than the temple worship, in the days of Jeroboam.

People often find it more convenient, especially in unpleasant seasons, to spend the sabbath in their houses, or in their fields, than to go some miles to the house of the Lord. They promise themselves much instruction from the bible, and religious books. But at the close of the day, they can realize little or no improvement. They have been drowsy and stupid; and have sought relief on their pillows. They have been perplexed and haunted with worldly schemes. Secular concerns have intruded on their minds. They have sought diversion from the newspaper, or books of amusement, and sought in vain. Satan has beguiled them, and "they are led captive by him, at his will." And scarcely a gleam of hope remains, that they will ever see the kingdom of God.

3. Does faith come by hearing? Then we have advantage to examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith. Many professors of the christian faith are found to be, in a great measure, negligent of the ministry of the gospel. Were they in the lively exercise of that faith which cometh by hearing, and which is cherished by hearing; they would certainly feel a lively interest in the preaching of the gospel. Every gospel sermon would be a feast of fat things. Real believers of the gospel "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls." "They receive the sincere milk of the word, and grow thereby."

In this view of the subject, have we not peculiar advantage for self-examination? Are we not able to decide whether we are begotten of God, through the gospel? "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Now is it possible, that we should be the subjects of the new birth, and this by means of the ministry of the word; without being at all sensible of it? and without realizing its peculiar effects? In order to find evidence of the christian faith, which comes by hearing the gospel, we must still delight to hear; and like David, we must love the habitation of God; and be able, from

our own experience, to say, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand," in the common walks of life.

4. Does faith come by hearing? even by hearing *the ministry of the word of God*? Then how deplorable is the condition of the heathen! And how loudly does the subject before us call upon us to exert all the means in our power, to meliorate their sad condition! Surely, we should never relinquish nor abate our exertions to furnish the world with a preached gospel, so long as a heathen remains on the earth.

From scripture, and universal experience, it is evident, that bibles, and tracts, and schools, however important in their place, will rarely produce the christian faith; because this usually comes by hearing. How infinitely important it is, that the world be furnished with faithful ministers of Christ! He that is indifferent to this great and sacred enterprise, must be either criminally ignorant of the state of the world, or grossly unbelieving and hard hearted.

Finally: Does faith come by hearing? Then let no one complain, that the means of grace are useless. The means of grace, in the hand of the Lord, are as effectual as the means of living, and of gaining property and honours. Since faith, which is a most precious gift of God, comes by hearing, let us be unfeignedly thankful, and never think it a burden to hear the ministration of the system of divine truth. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "Take heed *what* ye hear, and *how* ye hear."....AMEN.



ESSAY XXVIII.

Evidences of Piety.

THAT those who live in the daily exercise of Christian faith and holiness, may have satisfactory evidence of piety in their own hearts; and may also discover great evidence of piety in others; is clearly taught us in the holy scriptures. The Apostle John, including other christians with himself, says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the breth-

ven." And, as if this single evidence might be doubtful, he adds, "By this we know, that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." "And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." Again; "Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit." "He that keepeth my commandments, abideth in my love." This is an evidence of piety in ourselves, and in others. We may here observe, that the christian hope is grounded on more or less evidence of christian piety. Hence those who entertain this hope, are required to give a reason of it, with meekness and fear.

In proving from scripture, that there are certain evidences of christian piety, we have, in a measure, anticipated the evidences themselves. But we may now proceed to be more particular.

1. The change which has taken place, in those who are the happy subjects of divine grace, is of such a nature, and is so great, that, in general, it must be more or less realized. The nature of this change is, that, from being perfectly selfish and sinful, a man becomes, in a good measure, holy and benevolent. From the love of sin, he is converted to the love of righteousness. From the love of the riches, honours and pleasures of this world, he has "The love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost." This is the general nature of that change of heart, by which he becomes a man of piety. From the very nature of this change it might seem easy for christians, and especially those who have been long and faithful in the school of Christ, to realize, in some measure, the happy state of their own hearts. But this change is not only excellent in its nature, and perceptible by the subjects of it; but it is a very great change. It is called a new creation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God." This change is called regeneration. "The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is often represented as a resurrection of the dead. Christ speaks of this change, under the figure of the resurrection of the dead, in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead

shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This resurrection is of a spiritual nature, and is a more glorious work than the resurrection of the body. Surely, a work so great and marvellous must carry its own evidence with it; and especially to those who are the subjects of it. For it is a change of heart and life.

2. Love to the brethren is a precious fruit of the great change of heart, which has been under consideration. And this is represented as a sure, and infallible evidence of piety. "We know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." By this love, or the visible fruits of it, we discover the evidence of true religion in others, as well as in ourselves. "By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples," said Christ, "If ye have love one to another." Love is the fulfilling of the law; and it is the great requirement of the gospel. Especially is what is called *brotherly love*, which is so much extolled by the Apostle John, an evidence of piety. For this love consists in a holy delight and fellowship with the saints. Loving the holy brethren, because they are holy, is the same thing, or the same kind of affection, which is exercised in loving the Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly, "If any man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

3. The sum total of the evidence of grace, consists in discovering those things, in which true religion consists; and in complying with all its requirements. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." Instead of considering the commandments of the Lord as a grief and a burden, we must be able to say, with Paul, "I delight in the law of the Lord, after the inner man." But to avail ourselves of this evidence of piety it is required of us, that we be very strict, constant, and candid in our attention, to find out, and understand all those things, in which true religion consists. For if we mistake the nature of religion, we shall mistake its requirements; and our practice will be as corrupt as our principles. Having a correct view of the commandments of Christ, and finding our hearts and practice in conformity to them, we have clear

and satisfactory evidence of vital piety. This is abundantly confirmed, by the beloved Apostle. "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we, that we are in him."

What then are the commandments of Christ? To notice only his leading commandments, we may observe, that the first of all is repentance. Since the coming of Christ, as the light of the world, "God now commandeth all men, every where to repent." This was the first command, proclaimed in the ears of all the people, by John the Baptist. When Christ also sent out his disciples, and seventy others, to preach and work miracles in his name, his charge was, "Preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The same was the doctrine on the day of pentecost. Repentance was enjoined as the first, and the indispensable duty of the convicted multitude. And the repentance required, was something more than a selfish sorrow and regret, that they had exposed themselves to misery. It was a sorrow of heart for sin, on account of its odious and hateful nature; and its fatal consequences. It was a repentance which prepared the hearts of men to receive Jesus Christ, and to relish the blessings of his kingdom. Such a repentance, realized and cherished in the heart, is one of the best evidences of true religion.

Another commandment of Christ is, that we believe on him, and receive his testimonies. This, as well as repentance, was taught by the forerunner of Christ, who was a burning and shining light. He taught his numerous followers not to embrace him as the Saviour; but to believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Christ. Christ himself very strenuously required the people to believe on him. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." And the faith which Christ requires is more than a cold assent to the truths of the gospel: it is a faith which works by love—which purifies the heart, and prepares the soul for heavenly enjoyments. It is a cordial assent to the gospel, and implies supreme love to God, and a cheerful obedience to the commandments and ordinances of Christ. This faith is productive of inexpressible joy in Jesus

Christ. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Surely, they who realize such a faith as this, have, in their own minds, a good and comfortable evidence of real piety. This is the faith of God's elect.

We observe further, that humility, meekness, and submission, self-denial, and compassionate love to our enemies, are not only required of us; but required as the evidence of religion. We are to love our enemies, do good to them that hate us, and in all things, demean ourselves, as the meek and humble followers of Jesus Christ, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven. "Take my yoke upon you," said the Saviour, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls." Ye shall enjoy the evidence of religion. Absolute resignation, and unconditional submission to God, choosing that his counsel should stand, and that he should do all his pleasure; is a bright evidence of grace. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "Father, glorify thy name." "If we are in the likeness of Christ's death, we shall be also, in the likeness of his resurrection." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Many things more might be suggested, as evidences of piety; but the substance of the whole would be the same, that the evidence of religion arises from a discovery and approbation of those things in which religion consists. Would any give diligence to make their calling and election sure? let them "add to their faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." These are such evidences of piety, as are satisfactory, and such as are incontestable.



ESSAY XXIX.

The Christian Church.

HAVING, in the preceding Essay, considered the evidences of piety; it is proper, in the next place, to attend

to the institution of *the church of Christ*; and the proper qualifications of its members. The word church, is abundantly used in the scriptures; and used in various senses. It sometimes means the whole family of saints, in earth and in heaven; together with all the elect, who are yet to be born, and to become the subjects of divine grace, down to the end of the world. This universal body of saints constitutes what is called *the invisible church*. To this church the Apostle has reference, when he speaks of Christ as being "the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Also, when he speaks of the manifold wisdom of God, which is made known by the church; he uses the word in this most extensive sense. When Christ is said to be the head of the church, and to love the church, and give himself for it, as an offering and sacrifice to God; reference is had to the invisible, spiritual, and universal body of Christ; including all the real saints. The general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, spoken of by the Apostle, can have reference, only to the invisible and universal church.

Again; The term church, is often, and more appropriately used, to mean the whole body of visible Christians, in all the various parts of the world, wherever there is a profession of the Christian religion. This is called the *visible church*, though, perhaps, not in the strictest sense. For when we contemplate the church as consisting of individuals, or even of corporate bodies of Christians, scattered over a great part of the earth; and in many jarring denominations; we find but little that is visibly pure and holy. Yet it is a fact, that the whole body, professing the Christian faith, is considered as the visible, though a very imperfect church. To this general idea of the church, the Saviour had reference, when he said to Peter, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." By the whole church, in any city or province, is meant all the individual bodies, of the various Christian denominations.

We observe once more; that the term church, in its most common and appropriate sense, means a number of professed believers and followers of Christ, male and female, united voluntarily, in solemn covenant with God, and with one another, to walk together in holy worship

and ordinances; to watch over, encourage, and aid one another, in the divine life; and, as occasions may require, to exhort, admonish and reprove one another; and faithfully to maintain the holy discipline which the gospel requires. This is a general definition of the church of Christ, as it exists at the present day. Distinct churches are organized, consisting of as many professed believers as are conveniently situated to meet for religious worship and ordinances. All these are so many branches of the whole body, of which Christ is the head. But it is to be considered, that each of these christian churches, like all other bodies corporate, stands in need of guides and leaders. And without any leaders, no church is to be considered as being well organized and qualified to transact those important concerns which frequently occur. The admission of members, and more especially, the discipline and exclusion of offenders, requires the wisdom, not only of the body of the church; but also of presiding elders. Hence the Apostles were careful to ordain elders in every city and church; plainly implying that elders are essential to the proper and complete organization of churches.

Respecting the proper officers of the church, and their several duties, we may observe, that since the death of the Apostles, who had no successors in office; it appears from the New Testament, that there is but one order of ministers remaining in the Christian church; and that all their various names and titles and duties belong to one and the same office. *Elder and Presbyter*, are words of the same meaning, and from the same original. So are *Bishop and Overseer*. It is also evident from scripture, that the office of an elder and bishop is the same. We read, that Paul in his journeying near to Ephesus, sent and called for the elders of the church; and in his charge to them, he said, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, or *bishops*." And, that the same elders, or bishops, were also called pastors, is evident from the next words, in the same charge. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." That the elder and bishop are the same in office, is further evident from what Paul said to Titus. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order

the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city. If any man be blameless. For a bishop must be blameless." Here we find, that elders and bishops sustain one and the same office in the church. The Apostles, Paul and Peter, called themselves elders, as well as apostles; and the exhortation of Peter to his fellow elders was, "Feed the flock of God that is among you." This is the pastoral duty; "taking the oversight," or bishoprick over them. Thus we find, that the titles, elder, pastor, bishop and minister, are titles of the same officers in the church. Among all these titles, perhaps, *minister of the gospel* is the most appropriate, and the most in common use.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, where the various gifts of Christ to men are enumerated, there is a seeming difference expressed between "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers." The apostles we have considered as elders divinely inspired, not only to preach the gospel; but to complete the book of divine revelation. In these respects, they had no successors in office. The same is true, with respect to prophets. None have appeared in the church, vested with any authority, as prophets, since the canon of divine revelation was completed. With respect to evangelists, it appears, from the signification of the name, that they were considered, by the Apostles, as a class of elders and bishops in office, whose more particular business it was, to preach the gospel as itinerants, and missionaries; and to evangelize those who had been heathen, or heretics. Paul was the most distinguished evangelist. Philip was called the evangelist; and probably, he never had the charge of a particular church. Timothy, who appears to have been somewhat of an itinerant and missionating elder, was exhorted to *do the work of an evangelist*. As to pastors and teachers, we have found them to be the same in office, as elders or bishops. These titles are most appropriate to settled, and stationary ministers of the churches.

Thus we find most plenary and abundant evidence, from the inspired Apostles, that among the ministers of Christ, and officers of his church, no different grades of office are to be found. All the ministering servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, stand on a level with one another. No one, more than another, is to be called *Rabbi*. And

the followers of Christ are expressly forbidden to call any man Rabbi. So far was the blessed Saviour from tolerating dignities and powers, among the officers of his church, that when the question was proposed, "Who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He immediately called a little believing child, as small a child, perhaps, as was capable of expressing faith in him. This child he produced as a sample of those who should be most distinguished in his kingdom. The idea was, that humility and meekness, and a renunciation of all worldly power and dignity, should constitute the highest dignity and honour in his kingdom. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

So far are the ministers of Christ from having the government and control, one of another, in any case; that they have no government and control of the church, nor of an individual member of the church. They are utterly forbidden to "Lord it over God's heritage." They have no power to admit, nor to reject members, nor to interfere at all, any farther than to serve as moderators, in the discipline, and other transactions of the church. All this has been substantially proved; and how astonishing it is, that in the face of all this light, the officers of the church, from age to age, have been loaded with honours and dignities! and armed with next to omnipotent power!

The only other office in the church, is that of *Deacons*. The word, Deacon, as well as the word, Minister, signifies a servant. The duty of a deacon is, not only to exhibit an example of gravity, and undissembled piety and godliness; but, in particular, *to serve tables*. To them it belongs, to provide for the holy communion; to attend to the daily ministrations to the poor and afflicted. In short, all the temporal concerns of the church devolve on the deacons. And considering the character which is requisite to this office, it is natural to conclude, that deacons are, in many cases, required to serve as leaders of the church; leaders in prayer, in exhortation, in reproof, in instruction. For it is to be remembered, that their institution at first was for the express purpose of alleviating the burdens of the ministers of the word. So far as they can do this, without infringing on the ministerial office, they are bound to do it.

The number to be appointed as deacons of the church, depends on circumstances. At Jerusalem, there were several thousand christian professors, organized in one church, probably consisting of seven branches, with their elders. In this great body of christians, seven deacons were appointed. This is recorded as a general sample on the subject. Churches destitute of pastors, and in no way to obtain them, should, if circumstances permit, increase the number of deacons; that the pastoral duty may, in some respects, be supplied. For it is highly important, that people assemble for social worship, *every Lord's day*, and in every society.

These are some of the leading thoughts, respecting the church of Christ, organized according to the gospel plan; with its officers, and their several duties. That Christ has thus instituted his church, is evident from the practice of the apostles and elders, and their great success, under the noted commission of their Lord; "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Under this commission, they soon established churches all over Judea, and throughout the vast empire of Rome. These churches were owned and blessed of Christ, and were edified together in love, under the influences of the Holy Spirit.

The next thing that claims our attention is, what are the proper qualifications for admission as members of the church? From scripture and reason, it clearly appears, that the most important, and necessary qualification for membership in the christian church, is *real christianity*; real and unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ. This is necessary to salvation; and without this, it is impossible to please God. But the object of uniting with the church is nothing short of salvation. It is to cultivate the christian graces, and to cherish that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." To unite consistently with the church of Christ, we must be able, in some good measure, to satisfy ourselves, and to satisfy the church, that we are real christians, having, in a spiritual sense, passed from death unto life. While absolute assurance is hardly to be expected, we must proceed on other ground; the ground of a prevailing and comfortable hope. To prove this point, we

observe, that faith in Christ is necessary to the Christian baptism. The eunuch being anxious to receive the Christian baptism, Philip said to him, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." On the day of Pentecost, "They that gladly received the word were baptized." Gladly receiving the word, was receiving it by faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and then follows the Christian profession. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." No one can, on bible ground, receive the Christian baptism, without a credible profession of the Christian faith. But baptism is an indispensable condition of membership in the visible church. The consequence is, that the Christian faith is a necessary qualification for admission as a member of the visible church.

This principle is necessary to Christian fellowship. "For, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel." To the church it is said, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." How can all this be? if unbelievers may be admitted as members of the church. Would they constitute a holy temple? In another place, the Apostle gives to ministers, and those who are employed as builders of the church, a solemn charge, respecting *the materials*, with which they build this sacred temple. "The foundation is Christ. Other foundation can no man lay. Now if any man build on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest." The materials which every builder has added to the temple will appear, of what sort they are. Let every man, therefore, take heed how he builds on such a foundation as Christ. "If any man defile the temple of God," which is the church of Christ; "him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy." Thus it appears, that the essential qualification for membership in the church, is real religion. With precious materials must the spiritual house be built; and if, on trial, any of the materials prove corrupt; they must be rejected. But notwithstanding all the care and strictness of the builders of the church; hypocrites will sometimes

gain admission. Christians must wait and labour till the Millennium, before it can be said, that "there is no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord."....AMEN.



ESSAY XXX.

The ordinance of Baptism.

No part of the system of divine truth is more instructive, interesting, and important, than the sealing ordinances of Christ. They are full of gospel instruction. While they are peculiarly expressive of the native pollution and depravity of man; and of his condemned state, under the covenant of works; they are a seal of a new covenant relation to Christ, and of his precious promises to all true believers. In short, the whole plan of salvation by grace, is most significantly expressed, by the two special and perpetual ordinances of Christ.—And the first, in order, which now claims our attention, is the ordinance of *Baptism*.

Ever since the days of Moses, if not before, baptisms, or what are called *divers washings*, have been administered in the church of God. These divers washings, under the law of Moses, have been no human inventions; but have been practised according to divine institution; all of which were expressive of the native pollution of the human heart, and of sanctification by the Holy Spirit. All the ancient washings and sprinklings, whether of water or of blood, conveyed, typically, some important instruction, relative to the more clear dispensation of the gospel, after the coming and work of the glorious Redeemer. A sense of sin, and of the pollution of the heart, and of the need of spiritual cleansing, or purification, was impressed on the minds of God's ancient people, by their ceremonial washings, and sprinklings. So that, generally speaking, the same kind of instruction has been derived from the application of water, in the various ages of the world; and under the various dispensations of divine grace. Corresponding with all other washings, was the baptism of John. It was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It was designed to teach the

people, that they were altogether polluted with sin, and, in their natural state, stood in perishing need of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The baptism of John did indeed imply the profession of repentance; for John required of all who came to his baptism, a new heart, and a new life.—"Bring forth, therefore, fruits, meet for repentance." Ancient ordinances, in general, were typical, and expressive of the same things which are expressed by present ordinances. For, in profession and practice, the church of God has been essentially the same, in all ages; religion and salvation have been the same: and, beyond a doubt, the ordinances have been of the same general import? The Passover, for instance, while it commemorated the deliverance of God's people from Egyptian bondage, by his passing over the houses, upon the doors of which the blood of the paschal lamb was discovered; and destroying all the first born of Egypt; was a striking representation of the deliverance of sinners from spiritual bondage, by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. "Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us." And how perfectly similar in its import, was the passover to the sacramental supper! Both of them, in the clearest manner, exhibit the atonement by the sufferings and blood of the divine Redeemer. The bloody ordinance of circumcision, likewise, which signified "the cutting off of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ," or by his sufferings and death, is found to signify the same thing as the christian baptism. Both were instituted, as successive signs and seals of the christian faith; and of an interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace we find plainly stated in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis.—The Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect;" be thou upright, sincere, or faithful; "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly." The multiplication of spiritual, as well as natural seed is here intended. Hence it is added, "For in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Having proposed to Abraham the covenant of grace, the next thing was, to appoint a token, or seal of this gracious covenant; that all who were interested in its blessings, might be visibly distinguished from the world. Accordingly, and for this very purpose, the ordinance of circumcision was instituted, in these words, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." To ascertain the precise meaning of circumcision, and to discover, at the same time, its connection, or rather, its identity, or *sameness* with the christian baptism, we may attend to what is said by Paul respecting Abraham's receiving this ordinance. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." This definition of circumcision, applies equally, and exactly to the christian baptism. No one can frame a better definition of baptism. It is a seal or token of justifying faith. It is a token that the subject is already a believer, and not merely, that he ought to be a believer. It is a seal of the faith that he had, *yet being unbaptized*. A previous faith, is a requisite qualification. Of course, when circumcision ceased to be the token of an interest in the covenant of grace, baptism was substituted; and has ever since been continued as the seal of the covenant, and the token of initiation into the visible church of Christ. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." And as circumcision was a more special and distinguishing ordinance of God, than any other bloody institution in the Old Testament; because it was the seal and token of an interest in the covenant of grace; so also is baptism a more special and distinguishing ordinance of Christ than any other, because it is the seal and token of an interest in the covenant of grace, under the present and last dispensation of the gospel. Thus we discover not only the real import of the christian baptism; but also, that it comports exactly with the ordinance of circumcision. This appears still more clearly, by attending to the commission, given to the Apostles; and their consequent practice. Their commission was, "Go, teach all nations;" literally speaking, "Go, disciple all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In Mark's gospel, the words are these, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Go as far as possible. Penetrate the heathen world, as well as the civilized; and preach the gospel to old and young, to bond and free; "to every rational creature." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned;" whether baptized or not. Such was the commission of the Apostles; and what was their practice? Their practice was, to penetrate as far as possible into the various quarters of the earth, even of the heathen world, preaching the gospel of Christ, and baptizing all who gave evidence of a saving faith in him. According to the practice of the Apostles, under their commission, it is evident, that the christian baptism is, as circumcision formerly was, the sign and token of spiritual purification; and is the ordinance, by which true believers are visibly designated, as being qualified by divine grace, for a standing in the church of Christ.

The first administration of the christian baptism, was on the day of Pentecost. Having heard the preaching of Peter, many were convicted and converted. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day, they were added to the christian church." These were such as gave evidence of a spiritual cleansing, even "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." The same was the case, at the house of Cornelius. When Peter preached unto the people, that "Jesus Christ was *Lord of all*; and that through faith in his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins; the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Also, when the eunuch professed to believe, that Jesus was the Christ, he was baptized by Philip, the Evangelist. On the same condition were the jailer and his household baptized. And faith in Christ was the condition of the baptism of all, of whom we have any account in the history of the life, ministry, or practice of the Apostles. A credible profession of faith in Christ, is the condition of the christian baptism.

Another branch of this important subject, is, that not

only believers in Christ, but their infant seed and households are proper subjects of the christian baptism. This point is settled by inferential reasoning, if not by direct scripture testimony. It is very evident, that infants and households were included in the covenant which was made with Abraham. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." "Every *man-child* among you shall be circumcised." Abraham's own faith, being sufficiently proved, to render him a proper subject of circumcision; he was commanded to circumcise his whole family. All, whether born in his house, or bought with his money: all, of whom he had a legitimate control, "must needs be circumcised." This was a standing rule in the Abrahamic church, so called, down to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Infants and households were always circumcised on account of the faith of the parents, or heads of the families. On their own account, they could not, consistently with the terms of the covenant, be proper subjects of circumcision. It is hence evident, that the covenant of grace does admit of such a thing, as parents acting for their children, so far as respects their receiving the token of a visible standing in the church. The same principle was evidently transmitted from the Abrahamic to the present dispensation; in which baptism, instead of circumcision, is the seal of the covenant of grace. The spirit and essence of the covenant made with Abraham, is clearly recognized in the gospel: and on this ground it is written, that "The blessing of Abraham is come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ." As great spiritual blessings as Abraham inherited by faith, he has transmitted to all who believe, down to all generations. Accordingly it is said, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The covenant of grace is evidently the same to believers now, that it was to Abraham. Most abundantly do the Apostles establish the union and identity of the church, in all ages! Gentile christians are said to be "*fellow heirs with the seed of Abraham, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise, in Christ, by the gospel.*" If the church be the same, from first to last; and if the import of circumcision and baptism be the same, which has been demonstrated; and if circumcision was administered to infants on their parents' account, which

all must grant ; then the point is settled ; the doctrine of infant baptism is unanswerably proved.

To increase, if need be, the weight of evidence, by which this doctrine is supported, we may observe, that it was one of the precious blessings of the covenant of grace, that it contained promises respecting the children and households of the faithful. Is it probable, that when Christ came to accomplish the promises made to the Patriarchs, one of his first acts would be to blot out and obliterate a most interesting and glorious part of the blessings promised in the covenant ? It is absurd to suppose such a thing. To settle this point, little children, even infants, were by their parents brought to Christ for his blessing ; well knowing, that if infants were no longer to be dedicated to God for his blessing, they should be rejected. But he readily embraced them, “took them up in his arms and blessed them ; and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Of such, as well as adults, is the visible church. This is a clear proof, that the infants of believers are regarded in the same light now, as in the days of Abraham ; and have the same standing in, or relation to the visible church ; and of course, the same right to the seal of the covenant of grace. Nor do we find, in any instance, that the cavilling Jews ever alleged, that the gospel cut off infants and households from their long standing in the visible church of God. The reason was, *There was no ground of cavilling.* When a question arose among the Corinthians, whether it was lawful for a believer and an unbeliever to live together in the marriage relation ; the Apostle decided in these words, that, “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy.” Whatever this holiness may be, it is in consequence of being connected with *a believing parent ;* on whose account they are, doubtless, proper subjects of the christian baptism. Comparing the church of God to an *olive tree*, Paul taught most distinctly, that the ancient Jewish church was the good olive tree, the root of which was Abraham. And, that the present, gentile church was grafted into the very stock, from which the Jewish branches were broken off by unbelief. And that they

received of the root and fatness of this good olive-tree. To cut off all boasting, on the part of gentile christians, they were given to understand, that this grafting is contrary to nature. The scion bears not its own fruit, according to natural grafting; but the fruit of the stock. The preeminence therefore is in the Jewish or Abrahamic stock. To the gentile Christian he says, "Thou bearest not the root; but the root thee." Despise not, therefore, the Abrahamic church.

The doctrine of infant baptism, and of the connection of children and households with their parents, in the covenant of grace, may be further confirmed, by a consideration of the state in which man was at first created; and of the constituted connection of parents and children, from the beginning. It was a current idea from the beginning of the world, that parents must, by divine appointment, stand or fall, not only for themselves, but for their children. The fate of the child must be somehow involved in the fate of the parent. Adam was the federal head of all his posterity. So that when he fell, he involved all his posterity in a state of sin and guilt. And this divine constitution was perfectly reasonable. For all will grant, that infants can exhibit no character, nor can they act for themselves. All will also grant, that they *may belong to the family of God*, and be the heirs of salvation; but they can sustain no visible relation to God's kingdom, but only through the medium of their parents. And this relation has been visible, in all ages. Godly parents, imperfect and unfaithful as they are, are, generally speaking, blessed with a godly posterity; and ungodly parents are followed with an ungodly posterity. The posterity of pious Seth were blessed; and called *the sons of God*. The posterity of Cain were cursed; and in time, filled the earth with violence. Noah, by his faith, saved all his family in the ark. He believed God's threatening of a flood, and, in obedience to his divine command, he laboured a hundred and twenty years to "build an ark, to the saving of his house." When the great work was completed, God said to Noah, "Come thou, and all thine house into the ark, for *thee* have I seen righteous before me, in this generation." The whole family were saved from the deluge, only for their father's sake. "The like figure whereunto," says Peter, "even baptism, doth

also now save us." The salvation of Noah's family, by his faith, was a figure, or a type of household baptism; by which whole families are brought into *the ark*, meaning the visible church, by the faith of their parents. Thus the doctrine of infant baptism is confirmed by the earliest institutions, and events; and by the views and practices of all the Patriarchs, both before and after the flood.

Finally; The visible, and imperfect church of Christ is essentially the same, in every age, and under every dispensation of the gospel. And, in every age of the world, the infants of believers have borne one and the same relation to the visible church of the Redeemer. If they ever could, with any propriety, receive the token of the covenant of grace; as they, in fact did, when they received the sign of circumcision; they are as clearly entitled to the present token of the covenant, which is baptism.

The discussion and proof of the doctrine of infant baptism leads to the following inquiries.

1. What is the relation, in which the baptized children of believers stand to the visible church? It is easier to say what this relation is not, than what it is. It will be granted, that the households of believers are not regenerated, by the christian baptism. Baptism, of itself, is not *the putting away of the sins of the flesh*. It has neither a physical nor moral influence upon the character of those who receive it. Having the seal of the covenant in infancy does not, therefore, constitute the same relation to the church in childhood, which exists in their believing parents. Believing parents actually embrace Jesus Christ, and walk in his commandments and ordinances. But those who are by them devoted to Christ in infancy, even by the most pious parents; and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; may live to advanced age before they manifest any compliance with the terms of salvation. No one can claim an actual brotherhood with the church, till he possesses the character of a brother. Circumcision was nothing under the law of Moses, unless to those who kept the law. "If thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." The same is true respecting baptism. It constitutes no one a Christian; and is of no avail, without the christian faith. "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

We observe further ;

Baptism in infancy, or on account of the parent's faith, gives no right or title to any privilege or ordinance in the church. No unbeliever, no ungodly person, can bring a claim, on the ground of infant baptism, to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. No unconverted parent has a right to baptism for his children, on the ground of his having been himself a subject of infant baptism. No one has a standing in the church, so as to enjoy christian privileges, except those who *stand by faith*. When an infant is baptized, the transaction is between God and the parent. The promise respecting the child, in the covenant of grace, is made to the parent ; and through the parent, to his seed. "I will be a God to thee [parent] and to thy seed after thee." This promise is on very strict conditions ; conditions to be performed, only by the parent. The child, is unable to determine, whether the parent has performed the conditions of the covenant, so as to secure the promised blessings. But even admitting, that the child has assurance of the promised blessings, sooner or later ; yet so long as he considers himself in an unconverted state, he ought to feel excluded from gospel ordinances. He ought to lay no claim to promises, which are not made to himself, but to his parents.

Further ; The relation to the church, which is constituted by infant baptism, is not such as renders it proper, for the church to receive any, as members, merely on the ground of their baptism. Nothing short of personal holiness, or a vital union to Christ, is allowed, by the scriptures, as a qualification for admission to membership in the Church.

What then is the relation to the church, which is constituted by infant baptism ? The answer, in short, is this ; They who are faithfully dedicated to the Lord, in the ordinance of baptism ; and who are by a pious education, *trained up in the way they should go* ; are those to whom respect is had, in the great and precious promise of God. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." The covenant which God made with Abraham, of which baptism is now the seal, is emphatically, *the covenant of promise*. If christian parents were as faithful, and as confident in God, as our father Abraham was, they might doubtless take hold of this glorious promise. That such

a faith is attainable, as will secure saving mercy to the most numerous household, is evident from God's testimony concerning Abraham; "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken." This idea is current in the holy scriptures. "The just man walketh in his integrity, his children are blessed after him." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "A good man," a man of faith and hope, such as Abraham was, "Leaveth an inheritance to his children's children." But the inheritance exists in promise; the condition of which, depends on the parent. Could all believing parents be persuaded to walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham; we should soon realize a difference, generally, between the children of the faithful, and the children of infidels, as respects their relation to the christian church. The baptized families would be viewed as *children of promise*, AS ISAAC WAS; and in early life, they would be coming forward to the christian profession, and to the participation of promised blessings; "but the seed of evil doers *would never be renowned.*" How early, or how late in life, those who are in God's estimation, children of the promise, shall become the subjects of renewing grace, so as to be in full connection with the church of Christ, infinite wisdom must determine. Manasseh, the son of pious and faithful Hezekiah, was probably converted from his abominable idolatry, in a way of covenant promise; and in answer to fervent prayer, and the faithful discharge of parental duty. But he must first be a notorious idolater, and must suffer the awful chastisement of God; be carried bound in chains to Babylon, as the means of his conversion. At length, he was brought into the spiritual family of Christ. Manasseh, from his birth, and by his circumcision, always sustained a relation to the church, different from that which was sustained by the children of Ahab. On his father's account, he was a child of promise.

2. Having considered the relation of baptized children to the church; the next question is, what obligations are brought on children by their infant baptism?

Mankind who live under the light of the gospel, bap-

tized or unbaptized, are under great and special obligation, from childhood to old age, to repent and believe the gospel; to love God and keep his commandments. This is peculiarly incumbent on us, because we enjoy the light of the gospel. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," comparatively speaking, "They had not had sin," said the Saviour. But, on those who have been baptized into the name of the sacred Trinity, and have been specially trained up for Christ, there is the highest obligation to repent, and embrace the Saviour. Whatever may be their relation to the church; or however secure their salvation may be; yet this is *the only way of salvation*; and the only way to gain the evidence, that *they are the children of the promise*. So long as they neglect to give themselves to God, and to walk in his ordinances, they are constantly breaking God's covenant; and there is the utmost danger, that their circumcision will become uncircumcision, or rather, that *their baptism will become unbaptism*. Infinitely solemn and interesting is the standing of all that have been baptized into Christ, and have in a sense, *put on Christ*; and become the subjects of christian cultivation.

Whether there are any instances of parental faithfulness at this day, which *ensure* the salvation of children, is not for us to decide. Probably the instances are rare. Still there is some faithfulness; and there is not a little precious fruit. Though infidels and heathen, and people of all descriptions, are, in some instances, made the subjects of sovereign grace; yet by far the greater part of hopeful converts, are the children of the faithful. Great, therefore, is the encouragement, and very great is the obligation of baptized children, to ratify the covenant of promise, by devoting themselves to the Lord.

3. The next important question that arises on the subject, is, What should be the treatment of baptized children, in consequence of their relation to the church, by infant baptism?

That some particular care and discipline ought to be extended to all who are the subjects of baptism, seems to be both rational and scriptural. If the children of believers may, in any sense, be called *holy*, it implies, that they require a treatment different from that of those who are called *unclean*. Still it is to be kept in mind, that

the relation of baptized children to the church is an indirect relation. It is through the medium of their parents. It should seem, therefore, to belong to parents or guardians, rather than to the church, to exercise all the discipline that is required, during their minority. And this was evidently the manner of discipline under the covenant of circumcision. In this light we are to understand that most solemn charge given to parents, in the 6th and 11th of Deuteronomy. "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Parental discipline is also clearly implied in the direction given to parents, concerning the rebellious and incorrigible son. They were to bring him, with a complaint to the judges, who were to judge and condemn, and cut him off, by death, from the congregation of the Lord.

Under the present, as well as under the Mosaic dispensation, it would be acting the part of benevolence and faithfulness, for the church to assist in the government of the rebellious son; especially in cases where complaint is made by the parents. And beyond a doubt, in such cases as this, it belongs to the brethren of the church, if the rebellious son proves irreclaimable, to cut him off, by a public act, from all further connection with them, or relation to them.

As to those who are past the age of minority, and of subjection to family government; it must be agreeable to gospel rule, either to admit them as members, or to reject them as covenant breakers. But, as they cannot be received to divine ordinances, without christian qualifications, neither can they be rejected from their present relation to the church, without a regular course of discipline. In the present languid and feeble state of the church, household baptism, practically, stands for *almost nothing*. As matters are now conducted, or rather *neglected*, in the church, baptists are emboldened to say, that infant baptism amounts to little or nothing. If it be asked what is our first and immediate duty in this deplorable case? the answer is difficult. Neither the church nor individuals are bound to do *things which are impossible*. With regard to the subject of christian disci-

pline, the Apostle admonished the feeble and corrupt church of Corinth in these words: "Having in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

On the whole, as respects the treatment of persons baptized in infancy, we ought, first of all, to be agreed, and to be correct in theory on the subject; and in the second place, to use all our influence, to effect a reformation in practice; not expecting, by a single effort, to effect a complete reformation of such an accumulation of errors and difficulties.

Respecting *the mode of Baptism*, provided it be done in the use of water, and in the name of the sacred Trinity, the candid part of christian professors are not very strenuous. The truth, on this point, however, is of some importance. And does it appear probable, that the kind and merciful Saviour would insist on a mode of baptism, which is most hazardous of life? Thousands of shining converts, on the bed of death, who have as good a right as others to this ordinance; and to leave their names enrolled with the followers of Christ, are utterly deprived of these privileges, by the arduous mode of baptism by immersion. But where do we learn the doctrine of immersion? Certainly, not from John's baptism. For his baptism was before Christ made his appearance; and it was preparatory to his coming. It was before the distinct names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* were known. Apollos, a famous preacher under John's baptism, did not know, till he was taught by Paul, whether there were any Holy Ghost. Do we learn the doctrine of immersion from the transactions of the day of Pentecost? No. How could three thousand be baptized by the Apostles, in three or four hours, by immersion? Especially, when the event was unexpected, and without any preparation. The thing was impossible. Insurmountable difficulties also attended the baptism of the jailor and his household by immersion. The transactions were in the night; and the events named were numerous. Much must be said, and done, preparatory to going abroad in the dark, to find, or prepare, a place for the unexpected solemnity. Paul and Silas were greatly mangled with stripes; utterly unfit for such a service. The converted family hastened to relieve their distresses; and previous to the baptisms, the

jailor took them, the same hour of the night, at midnight, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway. All this was done, before he brought them into his house. All was done in the outer, or common prison. All was done *straightway*. All was done about midnight; and then he brought them into his house, and set meat before them. This whole story is perfectly inconsistent with baptism by immersion. Nor do we find evidence in the scriptures, of a single instance of baptism by immersion.

INFERENCES.

1. From the doctrine of infant baptism we infer, that infants are morally polluted and defiled. Were they, from their birth, pure and undefiled; what propriety would there have been in an ordinance, importing spiritual cleansing? Had there been no need of the washing of regeneration; what need was there of a symbol of this holy washing; and what need was there of receiving anciently, the bloody ordinance of circumcision? This and baptism are unmeaning ceremonies, upon any supposition, but that of the native moral depravity of infants. Consequently, they who hold, that children are born in a state of purity, are guilty of a gross absurdity, in the practice of infant baptism. Infant baptism is perfectly inconsistent with Arminianism.

2. From the view we have taken of the promises in the covenant of grace, and of the import of infant baptism, and of the relation which baptized infants bear to the church, and of the duties which result from this relation; we infer that God did actually reveal, and propose to fallen man, in the day of his apostasy, a plan of salvation, calculated to secure the restoration of all his posterity from their fallen and condemned state. Had Adam been as faithful as Abraham, would he not have equally secured the salvation of his household? And had the next, and every successive generation, been equally faithful; why would they not have been equally successful? Nothing, it is conceived, but the want of *parental faith and faithfulness*, has prevented the salvation of the whole human family! Can any subject then, be more interesting than this? Can any person, any parent especially, con-

template this subject with indifference? *That parent, we have reason to fear, "has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."*



ESSAY XXXI.

The Lord's Supper.

HAVING discussed, at considerable length, the ordinance of baptism, about which there is a diversity of opinion; we proceed to a brief view of the ordinance of *the Lord's supper*: in which we may hope for a greater harmony of sentiment and practice. The Lord Jesus, on the night, in which he was betrayed, partook of his last passover with his disciples; and the scene was unusually solemn. For at this feast, he gave them to understand, distinctly, that one of them should betray him. All began to suspect themselves, and to say, one by one, *Lord, is it I?* Even Judas, to conceal his treachery, said, *Lord, is it I?* Jesus, then divulged the secret; and Judas, being exposed, went immediately out, and collected an armed force. In the absence of Judas, Jesus instituted the sacramental supper. Having finished the passover, "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." The broken bread represents the body of Christ, "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" and the wine poured forth, represents the blood of Christ, shed in the garden, and on the cross, to make an atonement for our sins, and to redeem us from the curse of the divine law, "being made a curse for us." A plain example of the celebration of this ordinance was exhibited; to which was added the command of our divine Lord and Saviour, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" The remembrance of Christ, as he is set forth crucified before our eyes, is calculated to excite in our minds a lively sense of his infinite condescension and grace; as well as a solemn sense of

our own sinfulness and ill desert. Infinite must be the evil of sin, to render it necessary for the Lord of glory to die on the cross, to make an adequate atonement. "If one died for all," and one so infinitely dignified and glorious, "then were all dead," dead in trespasses and sins. To commune together, therefore, in the use of the symbols of Christ's death, is virtually to commune on the affecting subjects of human depravity and guilt, as well as of divine love.

The design of this sacrament, therefore, is two-fold. 1. To express the infinite guilt and wretchedness of fallen man; and, 2. To manifest the riches of divine mercy, in his redemption and salvation. By a view of our guilt and condemnation, as they appear in the light of Christ's sufferings on the cross; repentance and humiliation are excited. And by a view of the infinite mercy of Christ, displayed in his sufferings for us; faith, hope and joy are excited. For these important purposes, was the ordinance of the Lord's supper instituted.—These effects of the Lord's supper do not take place, however, except in humble and pious minds. Proud and impenitent hearts are disgusted with a clear view of the import of Christ's sufferings on the cross. They do not realize their sin and guilt, as they are represented in this awful scene; nor can they place their hope and confidence in the bleeding and dying Saviour. To them, Christ crucified is a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." They can see no propriety in the doctrines and ordinances of the cross. In every thing which is self-exalting or self-gratifying, they can have fellowship with one another; but in nothing which is self-condemning, like the sacramental Supper. This ordinance is, in every view, self-abasing. Whatever we read in the scriptures, respecting the price of our redemption; we find applied to ourselves, when we contemplate Christ crucified. Do we read of the inflexible justice of God? It is seen and realized in Christ crucified. Do we read of the necessity of evangelical repentance, and faith in Christ? and of personal holiness? These are clearly realized, when we look on Christ crucified. Surely, he, who died on the cross, to vindicate and magnify the divine law, while he opened a door of mercy to sinners, must be an infinite enemy to sin; and an infinite advocate for holiness. Do

we read, that the only foundation of pardon and hope, is laid in the great work of redemption by Jesus Christ? This is realized, by a view of Christ crucified. For surely, if pardon and hope could have come by the deeds of the law, or by any other means, Christ would not have died for our sins. If justification might have been obtained by the law, Christ is dead in vain. In short, the death of Christ confirms all his doctrines: all are sealed with his precious blood. In a correct view of the import of his death, which was, "that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth;" we see displayed and vindicated, the sum and substance of all the laws, doctrines, promises, and threatenings of the bible. The doctrine of Christ crucified is the dividing line, between christianity and infidelity. On these accounts, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is infinitely important and interesting. It is a commemoration of all that is divinely true, and specially interesting to the souls of mankind. And, as a means of growth in grace, no one thing is to be compared with it.

From the nature of this ordinance, which is the key, that opens to view the whole plan of the gospel; we see the great importance of being enlightened, united and harmonious, in our fellowship one with another; in order to commune, with profit and acceptance, at the table of the Lord. The Apostle speaks of some who "eat and drink damnation to themselves, *not discerning the Lord's body;*" not perceiving the true import of his sufferings; and not having those humble and devout exercises of heart, which ought to be excited by a view of Christ crucified. Would we avoid a perversion of this holy ordinance; we must, in the first place, well understand it; and, with great humility of heart, we must embrace *that very gospel*, whose doctrines and precepts it seals, establishes, and commemorates. On these conditions, and by these means, we may, through divine grace, enjoy real christian fellowship. We may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We may be strengthened to mortify our own corruptions; to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts." We may be enabled to glorify the name and religion of Christ, before an ungodly world. We may be instrumental of conveying the knowledge of the divine Redeemer, and

the savour of divine truth, to all nations. And when we sit down at the table of Christ, to celebrate his dying love, we may be prepared in heart, "to keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

On this subject, some practical queries arise, which deserve a serious consideration. One is this; Ought a member of the church to attend, and sit down to communion, having a certain knowledge, but no means of proof, that one or more of the communicants are guilty of censurable crimes? The answer must be in the affirmative, for the following reasons:

1. In the sacrament of the Lord's supper, our communion is not with individuals, but with the church, as a body. In the present degenerate age, we can hardly expect, that any of the churches should be so pure, as to be in a state of perfect fellowship among all its individuals. Yet so long as no visible offence or scandal appears, all the members are bound to treat each other visibly, as inoffensive brethren and sisters. And although it is painful to sit down with known offenders, and with those for whom we have no christian fellowship; yet, in this case, we must bear the burden which we cannot remove. Care must be taken to cultivate fellowship *with the body*; however corrupt we may consider some of its members.

2. If we forsake the communion of the church, on account of private and unproveable offences in individuals, we expose ourselves to a censure, from which we cannot be exonerated. We can give no reason for our absenting from communion, without impeaching, and criminating others, without any proof. We expose ourselves, therefore, to be cut off for slander. We may labour privately, with a private offender. But, in no way, is it lawful to express our censure publicly.

Another query is this; Is it proper for those who are under a course of discipline to be indulged in christian communion? The answer to this query must also be in the affirmative, with some proper exceptions. All the steps and measures taken with a supposed offender, previous to entering a complaint, are supposed to be private steps. But the prohibition of communion would immediately abolish all privacy in the business. And whether

the supposed offender was guilty at first or not, he is made guilty, at last, even of a public offence. He is, by a rule of the church, driven from communion; unable to assign a reason without divulging a process of private discipline. And even after a complaint is made to the church, the defendant has a claim to innocence, till he is proved guilty. Still, when the matter becomes public, it may be acting the part of christian humility, if not of christian duty, to withdraw, till the cause is decided. Possibly cases of this kind are alluded to by the Saviour, in these words: "Therefore, when thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest, that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Though reference is had, in this passage, to the settlement of difficulties between brethren, about which there is no dispute; yet it may be applicable to those who lie under an unsettled complaint and accusation.

Another query, somewhat indefinite, is this; Whether, on account of great difficulties, which often occur, in this imperfect and militant state, churches ought not frequently to suspend their communion, till difficulties can be healed, and communion become more pleasant and profitable? This query demands an answer, pointedly in the negative. No instance is to be found in the scriptures, of a suspension of communion, while the church exists. Not one of the churches in Asia, which were reproved by the Apostle John, was advised to suspend communion. They were exhorted to repent, on penalty of having their candlestick removed out of its place. So long as they existed, and transacted any thing, *as churches*, the holy communion must be supported. This should be a standing rule, to all generations. So important is this ordinance, that a neglect of it is, in fact, soon followed with the utter ruin of those churches which make the experiment.

ESSAY XXXII.

Church Government.

FEW doctrines, in the whole system of Theology, are encumbered with so great a variety of jarring opinions, as the doctrine of Church-Government. On this important, and highly practical subject, not only nominal christians; but even some of the most pious and learned christian divines, have been unhappily divided in opinion. A gradation of opinions and practices, from the pontifical down to the congregational mode of government, still exists in the christian world, and may continue to exist, till the Millennium.

Another thing, deeply to be lamented, is, that the churches in general, of the various denominations, have been led to adopt certain modes of government, by which, they have suffered themselves, generally speaking, to be defrauded of the most important right of self-government. Inadvertently, they overlook and forfeit their dearest rights: and experience, more or less, the weight and bitterness of ecclesiastical tyranny. Endeavouring to avoid this evil, and every evil, to which the church is liable, in this militant state; it is proposed,

I. To explain and prove the doctrine of the congregational government; and,

II. To illustrate from scripture, a plan for the consociation of the churches.

I. The government which Christ has instituted in his church, as it respects the discipline of offenders, is clearly stated, Matthew xviii. 15—18. “If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” If any member commit an offence, or crime, whether against thee or thy neighbour, or against God only; go, according to the direction, and labour to reclaim him. “And if he hear thee,” if he make thee christian satisfaction, “thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that, in the mouth of two or three witnesses;” witnesses of the faithfulness of the discipline; and of the behaviour of the accused; witnesses (if convenient) of the crime alleged, or of the guilt or innocence of the ac-

cused; that in the mouth of two or three such witnesses, "every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church," to the whole body of the church. Let the church be convened for the purpose; and having heard the complaint; let the witnesses be called to give their testimony. The charge being proved, let the church, as a body, and as individuals, labour solemnly to convince and reclaim the offender. "And if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This rule of christian discipline was given to the whole body of the church; and the solemn declaration of the Saviour, which could apply to none but the church; and which was addressed to the church only, was this: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Thus evidently was the government of the church committed to the church itself, as a body, which is capable, and which possesses the right of self-government.

In the fifth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, we are again clearly taught, in whom the power of the church is vested. The Apostle, in his address to the church of Corinth, sharply reprov'd the brethren, for retaining in their communion, a man guilty of incest. His reproof, on this occasion, clearly implied, that the power of excluding offenders belonged to the church; and for this purpose the church *were gathered together*. "When ye are gathered together," says the Apostle, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and my spirit, (for he was present in spirit, though absent in body) with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus." In the same chapter, the Apostle repeats his injunction on the church, in these words, "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." And again, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." These requirements were made of the church, and particularly, of the *male members* of the church. For women were not suffered to speak, or to usurp authority. Accordingly, the great Head of the church has minutely pointed out the way, in which the church is to proceed in the government of its members; but has given no hint of in-

struction adapted to rulers of the church, except that which relates to the common pastors of the churches, whose duty it is to preside faithfully and impartially, in all the important transactions of the church.

Finally ; It is humbly conceived, that no other institution of church government is to be found in the gospel, except that which is denominated *congregational*. It belongs to the brethren of the church, as a body of equals, led and guided by their elder, or minister, to admit and to cut off members, as cases, in their judgment, may require. Pastors of the church, in all their proceedings, are to act as first among equals. As such, they may give the casting vote. But they are to have no control, no preeminence, in the decisions of the church. They are, in no case, and in no measure, to "Lord it over God's heritage." The idea of rulers, delegated to transact, in a great measure, the governmental concerns of the church, is taken from a few passages in the New Testament, which are not very correctly translated. Heb. xiii. 7 and 17. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God ; whose faith follow." And, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account."

The word, rule, in these instances, is from the Greek root, *ἡγεομαι*, which signifies to lead or guide, and expresses no power or authority, except what is necessarily attached to the character and office of a minister of the gospel. It is indeed evident from the words quoted, that these guides or leaders, were the ordinary elders, or ministers of the gospel, and pastors of the churches. For they were men who had *spoken unto the people the word of God ; and who watched for their souls, as those that must give an account. "Whose faith follow."* In faith and holiness, imitate your spiritual guides ; your faithful ministers.

In support of a delegated government of the church, great stress is laid on a passage in 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." The word, rule, in this place, is from the Greek root, *ἡγομαι*, which signifies to preside, as a leader, or moderator. This is a duty, common to all the ministers of the gospel ; and to none but ordained pastors of the

churches. Let them be called elders, bishops, pastors or teachers, it makes no difference ; for all these are titles of one and the same office. Ruling elders, in this place, mean no more nor less than the pastors of the churches.

By the double honour, to which those ministers are entitled who preside well in their several churches, is plainly meant, a double, or ample *reward*. This appears from the next verse ; “ For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox, that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer is worthy of his reward.” A strict rendering, and paraphrase of the passage is this ; Let the elders or ministers, presiding well, be counted worthy of a double reward ; especially, they labouring in word and doctrine. Like all the ministers of Christ, they have a labour, far more arduous than other men. They labour as presidents, guides and leaders of the church. On them devolves, in a measure, *the care of all the churches* ; which was considered by Paul, as an arduous labour ; and they labour assiduously in word and doctrine. Let them therefore, be counted worthy, and let them receive an ample reward. “ For the Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” This was the object of the passage before us. In the epistle to the Romans, *he that ruleth*, is required to do it with diligence. Here the word, *ruleth*, is from the same original as before ; the meaning of which is *presideth*. And the very idea of an elder presiding in the church, as a moderator, implies, that the church exercises the power of self-government, and its members are amenable, only to their own body ; or to the church, of which they are members.

3. If the church, as a body corporate, possesses the right of self-government ; it is evident, that the presbytery, which consists of a convenient number of elders, organized in a body corporate, or in an association, ought to possess equally the right of self-government. The elders of the churches are consecrated to their sacred office, not by the church ; but by the presbytery. Consequently they are responsible to the presbytery, by whom they have been consecrated, rather than to the church, over whom they are the rightful overseers. To the presbytery it belongs to judge of the qualifications of those who offer themselves for the ministry ; and to consecrate those who, to them, appear to be qualified. To

the presbytery it belongs, to watch over one another, as brethren, to rebuke, admonish and exhort one another, as members of a distinct body. Paul, in his charge to the elder, Timothy, speaking of elders in particular, says, "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Rebuke the offending elders publicly, that the world may witness your faithfulness. To the presbytery alone, it belongs, not only to ordain elders in every suitable place; but to exercise over them a faithful discipline. It is the right and duty of the presbytery, to hear and decide on all complaints, exhibited against any individuals of their body. If the presbytery have given license to candidates to preach for a season, on probation for the ministry, they must faithfully inspect their candidates; and, in case of misdemeanour, withdraw the license. The dismissal and deposition of elders belong exclusively to the presbytery. Counsel, and advice may be sought by a delegation of the churches on many occasions, such as the ordination and dismissal of ministers; but never to control the decisions of the presbytery, in matters which belong to their jurisdiction.

That the presbytery, as well as the church, is a distinct body, possessing the power of self-government, and amenable to no others, is evident from the practice of Paul and Barnabas, and certain others, who composed the presbytery at Antioch. While they were preaching the gospel with great success, "certain men came down from Judea, and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." These Judaizing teachers, who troubled the churches, were reprov'd, *by the elders*, Paul and Barnabas, and not by the church. "And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, it was determin'd, that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, that is, *other elders*, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the Apostles and elders, about this question. And the Apostles and elders, or *the presbytery* at Jerusalem, came together to consider of this matter." To them, and not to the church, the appeal was made, by the presbytery at Antioch. By them was the whole discussion, and the final decision of the question. These Judaizing teachers were properly amenable to the presbytery at Jerusalem. The discussion and decision were, indeed,

in the presence of the whole church, who were, doubtless, convened as spectators, and who concurred with the presbytery in their decision. This coincides with Paul's charge to Timothy; "*Them that sin rebuke before all*"—before all the church, and all others who are disposed to attend to the matter; that your faithfulness, in the discipline of elders may be made manifest. On this occasion, letters of greeting were addressed, by the Apostles and elders *and brethren* at Jerusalem, to those in Antioch. But, neither in this instance, nor in any other, do we find the church interfering at all, in matters which relate to the government and discipline of elders.

An elder of the church may receive the private steps of christian discipline for his offences, from a common member of the church; or a common member from an elder. But a complaint against an elder should be exhibited to the presbytery; and one against a common member, to the church. This is agreeable, not only to the precepts and examples of scripture; but also to the dictates of reason. For it is a correct and important maxim, that every man should be judged by his peers, or equals. On this maxim is grounded the civil right of trial by jury. With special caution, an accusation against an elder may be received from a member of the church. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." And this, on account of the natural prejudice which mankind feel against their superiors. On this account, it is important, that the government of the church, and the government of its elders should be kept distinct; and that the whole, as far as possible, should be a government of equals.

In the plan that has been thus far delineated, giving the right of self-government, both to the church, and to the presbytery, as two distinctly organized bodies; it is readily seen, that a foundation is laid for peace and harmony. There is no clashing nor interference, in the exercise of government. Each body has its province, and has instruction from the word of God, how to transact the important business of christian discipline.

II. In perfect consistency with the congregational principles, recognized in this Essay, it is judged, not only expedient, but agreeable to apostolic doctrine and practice, that individual churches, with their respective elders

should *consociate*, by forming bonds of union and co-operation, to an extent equal to that of their several presbyteries or associations of ministers. Let each presbytery consist of as many elders, or pastors, as are conveniently situated to meet, and transact business. Let the individual churches also, under the presidency and guidance of their elders, and in concert with them, form a bond of union and agreement to the same extent; and let this confederation of elders and churches be called *the consociation of the churches*, answering to what is, in scripture, sometimes called *the whole church*; constituted by a union of all its parts. In this consociated state, the elders would act in the same capacity, as when presiding over their individual flocks; and in voting, stand on a level with the private brethren.

The consociation, retaining the essence of congregational principles, would, of right, and ought, by agreement, to constitute *a standing council*, to attend to those important causes which cannot be decided by the individual churches. For these being, in general, small bodies; in some instances, reduced to but three or four male members; and even these in a divided state; specially need the assistance of sister churches, to render them competent to the exercise of christian discipline. And the very design of the consociation of the churches is, not to intermeddle with the concerns of the presbytery; but to aid and assist in the government of *the churches*. It has been already stated and proved, that the whole system of ministerial concerns, belongs to the presbytery. In these matters, the consociation ought to have no direct influence nor control. But in every thing relating to the welfare of the church, there is advantage to do much good. As the presbytery ought to be the standing council, in all ministerial concerns; so the consociation ought to be the standing council, in all ecclesiastical concerns, not excluding advisory councils.

In order, however, to stand clearly on Apostolic ground, the decisions of the consociation must be final, and without appeal. This would effectually prevent the evils of *ex parte* councils; or councils selected from heretical churches for party purposes. The presbytery would regulate within their limits, all ministerial affairs; and the consociation all the affairs of the church. Nor is

there any thing alarming in this, when it is considered, that the consociation itself is a body congregational ; consisting of a delegation of the churches, which are in the strictest harmony and fellowship ; guided and instructed, but in no measure nor degree, controled by their pastors.

It is evident, that the mode of forming presbyteries and consociations, which has been stated and explained, was adopted by the Apostles, and primitive Christians. From the history of the first christian churches, it is evident, that by *the church, or the whole church*, in large cities and provinces, was meant all the christian professors in those places ; constituting, in many instances, a large number of individual churches, with their respective pastors. Such was the church at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Ephesus, and elsewhere. In each of these places, we find a plurality of bishops, or elders ; constituting in each, one presbytery ; and one consociation. That the churches, in these places, were consociated, is evident from their being mentioned in the singular number. The church at Jerusalem consisted of many thousands ; but all these constituted what was called *the whole church* ; and what we should call the consociation. In all the great cities, the case was the same. The elders constituted presbyteries, and the minor churches, by uniting together, constituted what we denominate consociations. Paul and his companions ordained elders in every church ; not a plurality in every church ; but one in each, which made a plurality in every city or district. Titus was directed to ordain elders in every city, doubtless one in each of the particular congregations of the saints in every city. The whole being the presbytery of the associated churches ; or of the *consociation*. Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called for the elders of the church. The church is here mentioned in the singular number, though there were, probably thousands of christian professors in Ephesus, divided into as many distinct churches as there were elders. Yet, being associated together, they constituted one body called *the church of Ephesus*. This was a whole church, consisting of many parts.

On the plan before us, each individual church, though associated with sister churches, would possess the power of christian discipline, in ordinary cases, even to excommunication ; yet, in difficult cases, there would be a right

of appeal to the consociation, which is no less congregational in its principles and practices, than an individual church. In such cases, certainly, deference ought to be paid to the consociated brethren, by submitting the decision of their causes to them, rather than to a council from abroad.*

It is obvious, that, by a voluntary consociation of the churches, each individual church becomes accountable to the whole organized body. And since churches, as well as individual members, are often guilty of great irregularity, or heresy, as was the case of the seven churches of Asia, they certainly ought to be subject to the discipline and government of their sister churches, in consociation. This is one of the most important purposes to be answered by the consociation of the churches. Were the churches, by mutual engagement, under solemn obligation to watch over one another, as churches, and to admonish and reprove one another, as occasions often require; the good effects would be visible. A great reformation might be effected, in the discipline of individuals, in the churches; and in the worship and discipline of families. How easy might it be, were all the churches united, to restrain and suppress the follies of our youth! Children and youth are to be disciplined through the medium of their parents; and parents, feeling a responsibility to the church, and the church to the consociation; there would seem to be an ample foundation laid for a general reformation, and for a defence of pure religion and morality.

Reasoning from analogy, we are naturally led to conclude, that all the presbyteries, who are on terms of fellowship with each other, would be disposed to associate, to cultivate harmony and love, and to strengthen and establish one another in the truth. In the days of the Apostles, there was a continual intercourse of all the presbyteries then in existence. Wherever Paul travelled, he had special intercourse with the presbyteries.—At Miletus, he had a special interview with the presbytery of Ephesus; and when he came to Jerusalem, he had a special interview with the Apostle James; “*and all the elders were present.*” The friendly and faithful intercourse, and

* Advisory councils, however, may be selected, at home or abroad; provided they be mutual and candid.

even the most extensive intercourse of the presbyteries, would be of high importance to the welfare of the church, and the progress of the truth.

How often do cases occur, even in the best state of the churches, and in the most harmonious state of ministers, in which one presbytery needs the advice and counsel of others. But, aside from all cases of difficulty or offence, great advantages may arise from what is called a *general association* of all the presbyteries in a state or nation. By such intercourse, local prejudices are removed, christian charity is cultivated, and light and truth promoted. This association of the various presbyteries, affords the most sublime pleasure, as well as religious and ministerial improvement. Christian fellowship is cultivated on a large scale; and with the greatest advantage. From the elders of the churches, who are quickened and animated in the cause of Christ, by their friendly associations; the flame of love and zeal is communicated to the churches; so that all christians share the common benefit.

Thus, in many respects, the plan of ecclesiastical government before us, commends itself to our consciences, and to our hearts. And it is humbly conceived, that, in its main principles, it is well supported by the holy scriptures, and does not deviate essentially, from the views, and sentiments, and practices of the venerable fathers of the New-England churches. Finally,

It is an important branch of the doctrine of ecclesiastical government and discipline, which relates both to the presbytery and to the church, to consider, what is the proper treatment of those who are rejected, for heresy or wickedness. From the scriptures relating to this question, it appears clearly, that those who are cut off *from the church*, in particular, are to be treated with less familiarity, and greater disapprobation than the wicked world at large. This is evident from the direction given by the Saviour, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Heathen and publicans were peculiarly odious in the eyes of the Jews; and they were strictly required by the law of Moses, to avoid all connection and friendship with the heathen. To associate with them, or to attend any of their feasts, was accounted an abomination. So also, to cultivate friendship and complacency with those who are regularly cut off from the fellowship of the

church, is a violation of the law of Christ. Very clear light is cast on this subject, 1 Cor. v. 9—11. "I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators." This was an admonition respecting company keeping in general. Christians are often admonished to shun bad company. In his former letter, he had no special reference to those who were excommunicated. Accordingly, this first admonition is qualified in these words, "Yet not *altogether*, with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or with idolaters. For then must ye needs go out of the world." The world is full of vicious unchristian characters. If the company of such must be avoided *altogether*, then must we abandon the necessary connections and supports of human society. We must needs retire wholly from the world. In another letter, therefore, the Apostle fully explained the subject; "but now I have written unto you *not to keep company*, if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat." Having exhorted the church *to purge out the old leaven*, to expunge the corrupt and vicious member, *delivering him to satan*, (in a regular and brotherly course of discipline) *for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*; and having *put away from among themselves that wicked, incestuous person*; the Apostle solemnly charges the brethren to avoid his company, and to shun all social intercourse with him. Elsewhere, he says, "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly. Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.—Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Let all your treatment of him be brotherly and benevolent; and according to the rule of christian discipline. Finally, the christian brethren and sisters are not allowed to keep company with those who are put away from among them, *no, not to eat*; that is to say, not to eat at any table, or on any occasion, which implies, *company keeping*. Here lies the stress of the prohibition, not so much on the article of eating together, as on the particular occasion of eating. At common and occasional meals, there may be no more idea of company keeping, or social intercourse, than in labouring, as often happens, in the service of the same man, in

the same field ; and in eating in the same dish, and drinking at the same bottle. On such accidental occasions, eating at common meals is not forbidden. But all expressions of complacency, all voluntary intercourse, except that which belongs to the family state is forbidden. All the conduct of the members of the church towards their excommunicated brethren and sisters, who are solemnly cut off, with a view to reclaim them from their offences ; should be of the same nature and tendency with their excommunication. All should express a strong disapprobation of the conduct of the offender ; and a solemn reproof of his wickedness ; but, at the same time, a most ardent desire to bring him to repentance ; and to restore him to the sheepfold, from which he has wickedly gone astray. In case of the restoration of the lost sheep, greater is the rejoicing of all the brethren in this sheep, than in all the flock that went not astray. But,

In the case of him who, at the marriage of the king's son, appeared among the guests, without a wedding garment, or without *the visibility of religion*, the sentence is tremendous. "How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ?" And he was speechless." He felt

* Not how camest thou in *heaven* without a wedding garment. For, without a wedding garment, no one could, by any means, enter into the heavenly state. Nor is heaven the place of the marriage of the king's son. It is in this world, it is here on earth, that Jesus, the Son of God, is married to the church, which is his bride, and is called the Lamb's wife. "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him ; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." To me it appears, that the parable of the marriage of the king's son represents nothing which takes place in heaven. It represents the pressing invitations of the gospel, made to the Jews, at first ; and being rejected by them, it is extended to the gentiles, *in the highways and hedges*. They consented to the invitation, "and the wedding was furnished with guests." Not expecting, however, that these new, gentile guests would be wholly free from false professors, the king came to inspect the wedding ; and there detected one who was a false professor ; and he was visibly so ; if not, how could he with propriety denounce judgment against him, before the multitude ? He was openly condemned, and cast into outer darkness and destruction. In this view of the parable before us, we see a specimen of the kingdom of heaven, as it relates to offenders in the church ; and the discipline by which they are cast out, into outer darkness.

the absurdity of appearing in the visible church without possessing, at least, the visible marks of a qualified guest. "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This parable was not designed to represent, primarily, transactions in the future world, nor at the day of judgment; but the transactions of the church, under Christ, their King, and in the present world. This *outer darkness*, into which the false professor is cast, is a representation of the state of excommunication. Into what an awful condition he is plunged, who is cut off from the church! He is an outcast from God and man; seemingly devoted to destruction. In human view, there is awful severity in his sentence!

Still, the design of church discipline, and of church censure, is perfectly kind and benevolent. It has for its object the salvation of the offender, as well as the honour of Christ. And if any thing can operate as a means of conviction and humiliation, this will do it. To be separated, in a regular, public, and solemn manner, and on the most fair and candid trial, from the visible church of Christ, and from all good society; to be adjudged, and rejected as perverse, and impenitent; by the body of the christian brethren, whose hearts bleed with compassion at every step of their faithful labour; and who proceed to the last extremity, with the deepest sorrow and regret, is enough to break the heart that is not harder than an adamant! No system of civil government exhibits such benevolence and compassion as characterizes the government of the christian church. In this, there is nothing vindictive, nothing oppressive. It is wholly the fruit of benevolence. It touches neither life, limb, nor property. It affects neither the interest nor liberty of offenders. And yet those who are obstinate and perverse, receive a doom, by order of the Head of the church, which is beyond expression dreadful. And this doom is ratified in heaven. "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

In a review of this subject, we remark, That, beyond measure interesting and solemn is the great work of christian discipline! And how important it is, that when it is

properly commenced, it be carried into effect, with meekness and humility! So that, if possible, offenders may be reclaimed; and so that Christ may be glorified in his church; and that all the adversaries of his people may be ashamed; and, that all people and nations may speedily flock to his standard, and submit themselves to the government of him, who is the Prince of Peace; and the earth be filled with his glory....AMEN.



ESSAY XXXIII.

The Millennium.

THE consummation of the glory and triumph of the church, in this world, is usually denominated the *Millennium*. And, that there will be, in the last age, or period of the world, a very happy and glorious state of the church of Christ, in which all nations, if not all individuals, shall savingly know the Lord; is evident from many plain scripture prophecies. That the duration of this happy period shall be a thousand years, commencing with the fall of antichrist, is evident from the noted revelation made to the Apostle John, in these words: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand; and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled. And after that, he must be loosed a little season." This is the conclusion of a series of prophecy, which reaches down to the end of the world; and from this we learn, that the last thousand years is to be a period of uninterrupted peace and prosperity: when "there shall be nothing to hurt or harm in all God's holy mountain:" and when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." "All shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." At the close of this happy period, satan will be loosed, and mankind will apostatize. Christ will then be revealed, in flaming fire to destroy all his enemies, to raise the dead, burn the world, and com-

mense the final judgment. These astonishing and glorious scenes will characterize the concluding age of this fallen world.

To illustrate distinctly, the doctrine of the Millennium, it is proposed, in the first place, to prove from the prophecies, the previous restoration of all the tribes of Israel, to the land of Canaan; and their conversion to the christian faith. That the Israelites will be restored to their own land, the land that was given to Abraham and his seed for ever; and that, before or after, or in the time of their restoration, they will be converted to the christian faith, is very evident from the prophecies, and is generally conceded, by those who embrace, in a literal sense, the doctrine of the Millennium. Some are of the opinion, however, that all the prophecies of their restoration from their dispersion among the nations, mean nothing more than their conversion to Christ, in common with the rest of the nations. And, that the distinction between the seed of Abraham and the gentile nations will be finally abolished. And that, as far as the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others, are to be understood in a literal sense, they have long been accomplished, in the restoration of the Jews from their captivity at Babylon.

But we are to consider, that these prophecies, in general, and many of them, in particular, speak of events to be accomplished *in the last days*. Isaiah and Micah utter, in the same terms, the prophecy of the Millennium, as an event of the last days. "And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it; And many nations shall come and say; "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." By the last days, in this and other prophecies, is evidently meant, a period after the coming of Christ; and long after the restoration of the Jews, from their captivity at Babylon. But no restoration of the Jews, since their awful dispersion, in the days of the Apostles, has yet taken place. We observe further,

The prophecies speak as clearly and distinctly of the

restoration of all the other tribes of Israel, as of the tribe of Judah. But, in the restoration from Babylon, only the tribes denominated Jews, were restored. The ten tribes, denominated Ephraim, have never yet experienced any restoration, nor any tokens of divine favour.

We may now attend to some of the many prophecies directly in proof, that all the tribes of Israel will be restored to their own land, the land of promise, and will be converted to the christian faith. In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, is a notable prophecy of these glorious events. Speaking of the gospel period, he says, "In that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass, in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time, to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shina, and from Hamath, and from the Islands of the sea." That is, from all nations, whither they are driven. "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel; and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart; and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day when he came up out of the land of Egypt." From this prophecy, it is perfectly clear, that there is to be a second restoration of all the tribes of Israel, under the names of Ephraim and Judah, to repossess, in love and harmony, the whole extent of the land of Canaan. Accordingly, we find in Jeremiah thirty-third, an assurance of the faithfulness of God, never to abolish his covenant with any branch of the house of Israel. "The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying; considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, the two families [Judah and Ephraim] which the Lord hath chosen, he hath even cast them off. Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the Lord, if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances

of heaven and earth ; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them." The prophecy of the restoration of Israel and Judah, by the prophet Ezekiel, is still more explicit and illustrious. A summary view of the thirty-seventh chapter will afford ample proof of the restoration of all the tribes of Israel, and their re-union, as in former ages, or as in the days of David and Solomon. In this noted chapter, under the similitude of a valley full of dry bones, is represented the present lost and seemingly hopeless state of the dispersed Israelites. By the resurrection of these bones, which were very dry, is strikingly represented their revival and restoration from captivity, by the power and mercy of God.

In the next place, the union and harmony of all the tribes, are clearly represented by the union of two sticks in the hand of the prophet. On one stick was written the name of Judah, and the house of Israel, his companions ; and on the other was written the name of Ephraim, and the house of Israel, his companions. The two sticks were then joined together in the hand of the prophet. And the whole parable is then applied in the following words : " Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and I will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land ; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel ; and one king shall be king to them all. And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." These are events which are not yet accomplished ; and which cannot be accomplished, without a general restoration of all the tribes of Israel to the land of Canaan, and a cordial union of the whole, under the spiritual government of Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace.

So plain and illustrious are these prophecies, that any further recital may be deemed needless. A few words may be added, however, from the eleventh of Romans ; to shew the remarkable coincidence of the Old and New Testament prophecies. " For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should

be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part, is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved ; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Marvellous as the conversion and restoration of all Israel may appear, yet, as much as we depend on any part of sacred prophecy, we may depend on this ; for none is more clear and explicit. And it is an animating and glorious prediction ! Especially when it is considered, that the restoration of the tribes of Israel shall be as life from the dead to the gentile nations. It shall open the eyes of a drowsy and slumbering world ; and put to silence the cavils of unbelievers and heretics. How ardently should we long and pray for the speedy restoration of Israel, and its blessed effects on the world !

We observe further, that the restoration of Israel is abundantly evident from the ancient promises of God, and from the covenant which he made with the Patriarchs. The land of Canaan, which God promised to the Patriarchs, was a type of heaven ; and the possession of that land was to be an everlasting possession. The meaning of which is, that it should be durable as the world. And although, from time to time, their posterity were expelled from the land of promise, for their idolatries, and carried into long captivities ; yet, in all cases, they had the promises of restoration. Nor did one of the promises fail. God's loving kindness was never taken from them, nor did his faithfulness ever fail. We may therefore be confident, that, however great and dreadful their present dispersions are, for their rejection and murder of their Lord and Saviour ; yet they are still "beloved for their father's sakes." Though, for the present, they are broken off from the good olive-tree ; yet God is able, and he will graff them in again ; even into their own olive-tree.

The restoration of Israel is evident also, from their marvellous preservation, as a distinct people, retaining their language, their religion, and peculiar habits, in circumstances, which would render these things seemingly impossible. That the Israelites should blend with no other nations, among whom they reside, must be owing to a special interposition of Divine Providence. Are they not thus miraculously preserved, for the great purposes which have been noticed in the prophecies ?

It is further remarkable, respecting this scattered, and most depressed people, that they are full of hope and expectation of returning, in due time, to their ancient inheritance. For this great object, they seem to be making preparation. They are careful to accumulate moveable property; as if preparing for a long and expensive journey. So strong is their expectation of returning to their own land, that they would renounce the religion of Moses and Abraham, rather than give up this expectation. And the way seems to be fast preparing for their return. The inhabitants of the land are sinking in sottish stupidity; and dwindling down to ruin. The Jews, on the other hand, are a rich, powerful and enterprising people. Should it be necessary, they may possibly possess the whole land by way of purchase, or redeem it with their money.

We have further to remark, that, at this day, the seed of Abraham are, more and more, *setting their faces Zionward*. There are, at present, as there have been for twenty years past, increasing numbers of hopeful conversions, among God's ancient people. The seed of Israel are even now, on our shores, as well as in other parts of the world, preaching to their unbelieving brethren, as well as to others, the everlasting gospel of Christ. The Jews are also said to listen, more and more, to the doctrines of the cross. There are, indeed, many things, indicative of a speedy restoration of Israel to their ancient inheritance.

The prophet Ezekiel, who is more clear and lucid on this subject, than any other prophet; having clearly predicted the conversion and restoration of Israel, in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of his prophecy; proceeds to state the happy consequences which will result to the heathen. "And the heathen shall know, that I, the Lord, do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for ever more." "At that time, many nations," not the antichristian, but the heathen nations, "shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: For the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." From these prophecies it is evident, that the Israelites, when brought back from their long and distressing captivity, together

with an innumerable multitude of the heathen, who shall, by their means, be converted to the christian faith, will constitute the great body of the christian church, previous to the utter destruction of antichrist. Of course, it will be previous to what is called in the Revelation, "*The battle of that great day of God Almighty.*" Of this battle, we have an illustrious description, in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy. The summary of which great battle is this; that when the set time for the utter destruction of antichrist shall come, the vast armies of Gog and Magog, by which are meant all the relics of the antichristian powers, from the north quarters, or from the Papal and Mahometan regions, together with all the powers of infidelity and idolatry, raging with envy and malice against the church of Christ; and especially against the Jews, who shall be restored from their captivity, shall combine together to go up to the mountains of Israel; hoping, by one grand effort, by one great and decisive battle, to put an end to the christian cause, by the total extirpation of the church; and, at the same time, to take an immense spoil from the great riches of God's restored people. Hear the boasting language of antichrist himself: "And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them, dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates; to take a spoil, and to take a prey; and to turn thine hand upon the desolate places, that are now inhabited; and upon the people [Israel] that are gathered out of the nations, who have gotten cattle and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land." With these envious, proud and avaricious views, all the antichristian hosts shall "go up like a flood to cover the whole land." "And thou shalt come up against my people Israel, like a cloud, a great company, and a mighty army." Probably a far greater host than ever appeared before, in the field of battle. This mighty host is to be destroyed before God's restored people. "And I will call for a sword against him, throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother." Immense will be the slaughter, on the part of antichrist; and it will be chiefly effected, by their mad butchery of one another. "And I will plead against him, saith the Lord, with pestilence, and with blood; and

I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." This exactly coincides with the judgments denounced in the Revelation, under the seventh and last vial.—“And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven; every stone about the weight of a talent; and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.” We hence see clearly, that this war of Gog and Magog, will be the execution of the plagues under the seventh and last vial; which awful events, are to us yet future; but are hastening to their accomplishment. Jews and heathen are beginning to advocate the christian cause; and the antichristian world is advancing in pride and atheism; so that these predictions are evidently drawing near to their great and awful crisis. These great judgments being executed on the armies and people of Gog and Magog, the result will be glorious. For the residue of men, shall by means of these great events be convicted and converted to the holy religion of the gospel. The promised Millennium shall then commence, and advance gloriously. After this decisive battle, war, which has been a scourge of nations, for so many ages, shall be finally terminated: And henceforth, “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” “Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself, saith the Lord God. And I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know, that I am the Lord. And the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. And I will set my glory among the heathen; and all the heathen shall see my judgment, that I have executed, and my hand, that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know, that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forwards. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel: And I will be jealous for my holy name.”

We have now had a sufficient view of the prophecies clearly to prove, that all the tribes of Israel will, sooner or later, be restored to their own land; and there they will be conspicuous as a christian church, to the end of the world. Their restoration will probably take place, in a great measure, before the fall of antichrist. For,

it is against this *restored people of Israel*, that the great warfare will be waged. We have found also, that the restoration of Israel, together with the battle and fall of antichrist, will be as life from the dead to the gentile, or heathen nations. Accessions to the church, which have begun already to multiply, both from the Jews and heathen, will greatly increase, so as to constitute a formidable army, before the decisive battle. The purity and harmony of the church will also be greatly improved. And from and after that great day of battle and decision, there shall be one Lord, and his name and worship will be uniform and harmonious. No more will be heard of jarring sects and denominations; and no more of heresies and delusions. "All shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas." Such will be the purity of the church, that hypocrites shall find no place, and "there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."

Having considered the events which, according to the prophecies, will introduce the Millennium, we proceed to state, more particularly, those things in which the peculiar glory and felicity of that period will consist. One great thing which has been incidentally suggested, is, an entire exemption from the horrors of war. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in abundance of peace." So great will be the love and harmony of all classes of people, and so strict will be their honesty and integrity, that civil society will scarcely need the aids and restraints of law and government. Some are of the opinion, that the government will become altogether ecclesiastical. Mutual love will be so strong, that no envying nor jealousies will be cherished. Each will esteem others better than himself; and by love men will serve one another.

Another thing conducive to the happiness of that day will be a state of great outward prosperity. The earth shall yield her increase. No more will hunger, nakedness and poverty distress the inhabitants of the world. A divine blessing will be implored on all the labours and occupations of mankind: and a prayer-hearing God will pour down his blessings, so that there shall scarcely be room to receive them.

Probably the Millennium will be also, generally, if not altogether a time of health. Pestilence is one of the sore judgments, with which God chastises his rebellious people. But, in that glorious period, there would seem to be no special occasion for divine chastisements. It is indeed written, respecting that blessed period, "That, the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick." Health and plenty will be among the precious blessings of the Millennium.

Furthermore ; In that day, there will be a very great increase of knowledge, especially the knowledge of divine truth. So early in life, and so rapid will be the progress of knowledge, that, in strong terms, it is alleged by the prophet, that "there shall be no more thence an infant of days." Comparatively speaking, none shall be infants in knowledge. The child, in this respect, shall die an hundred years old. Regeneration of heart will probably be in early childhood ; and the knowledge of divine truth will, early in life, equal the attainments of the longest life, in any previous age of the world. And, as all will have correct instruction, all will harmonize, "The watchmen shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." And it will no longer be thought a matter of indifference what men believe, and what they disbelieve. All will be *valiant for the truth* ; and all will "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints."

Not only will there be, in the Millennium, a great increase of knowledge, and a strong adherence to the system of divine truth ; but also, a proportionable increase of holiness. None will ever arrive to perfection in holiness, however, in the present life. As long as mankind are in a probationary and mortal state, they will realize, more or less, the sinfulness of their hearts : and from scripture, and christian experience, it is evident, that great attainments in holiness do not abate, but rather increase a sense of heart wickedness. "Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Doubtless, through the imperfection of the saints, which consists in the co-existence of sin and holiness in the heart, the christian warfare will continue, during the Millennium. It is highly probable, however, that the attainments in holiness, during that blessed period, even in the most imperfect saints, will far exceed

what have been witnessed in any period before. In that day, every thing that men possess will be consecrated to the service of God; and *holiness to the Lord* will be inscribed even on the bells of their horses; and upon all their utensils. Ardent will be the holiness and piety of the millennial saints.

From the scripture prophecies, we observe further, that the blessedness of the Millennium will extend over all the earth. Christ will be for salvation to the ends of the earth. To him will be given the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. "All the ends of the world shall see the salvation of our God." "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations." Not that Christ will save from perdition the kingdom of anti-christ. That kingdom is doomed to utter destruction. "Babylon, the great, is fallen, is fallen!" is in a measure, already fallen; and will soon fall to rise no more; will fall, as a mill-stone into the sea, and "shall be found no more at all."

Accordingly, we find, in fact, at this day, that while great and successful efforts are made to enlighten those pagan nations, who have never enjoyed nor abused the gospel of Christ; no door is opened by divine Providence, for the instruction and conversion of the popish and Mahometan nations. May we not conclude, that these nations are reprobate? And that they are gathering together *unto the battle of the great day of God Almighty*? Will they not then become the victims of divine indignation? "Then, the saints of the Most High will take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom, for ever, even for ever and ever;" or to the end of the world.

We remark further, that as the Millennium advances, the doctrines of salvation by mere sovereign grace, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, are more and more confirmed. The only reason given by the Psalmist, and the only reason which can be given why "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord," is this, that "the kingdom is the Lord's, and that he is the Governor among the nations." For, among the fallen race of men, none are found disposed to promote the

cause and kingdom of Christ. But were mankind ever so well disposed to do this, they would be infinitely deficient in power. No power but that of God, could accomplish the destruction of the great adversary; and the conversion of the whole world; and secure the faith and perseverance of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, during a thousand years. These are certainly, the works of God.

As a conclusion of this interesting subject, we may remark, that the view which has been given of the events preparatory, and of the events which shall constitute the glory and felicity of the Millennium, exactly corresponds, not only with the prophecies, but also with the series of facts, noticeable in the present eventful age of the world. Prophecies of the restoration of Israel, and of the conversion of the heathen, as well as of the decline and downfall of antichrist, are, beyond a doubt, in a course of accomplishment. The armies of Gog and Magog have, perhaps, been partially mustered and marshalled. Very great battles have been already fought, which might be anticipations of the greater battle of Armageddon. This warfare will not be decided, however, till after the Jews shall be, in a great measure, restored from their captivity, and re-settled in their ancient inheritance. For we have found abundant evidence, that the final battle is to be fought on the mountains of Israel; and the warfare is to be waged against those who shall be brought back from the captivity; and who will be happily settled in the land promised to Abraham and his seed. Great battles, it is said, have been already fought, but not so great as to involve in one common ruin, the whole antichristian world; nor have they been directly and professedly waged against the kingdom of Christ. Religion has been, in a great measure, out of the question, in the ardent struggles for power and conquest. These struggles, however, have been overruled by divine Providence, greatly to weaken the antichristian power. The waters of the symbolical Euphrates are drying up, and the way of the kings of the East, the conquerors of spiritual Babylon, is fast preparing. Yet the vision may be long. It is however, for an appointed time; and at the end, it shall speak and not lie. Therefore let us wait patiently. Never let the faith and patience of the saints be exhausted; especially when, by passing events, we have in-

creasing assurance of the accomplishment of all the glorious things which are spoken of the city of our God. Wait *half a century* for the restoration of Israel, and the conversion of millions of the benighted heathen; and for the harmony of the jarring sects of Christians. Wait and hope for the abolition of all ecclesiastical tyranny; and for the restoration of true christian liberty; under the holy discipline of the gospel. Wait for an end of all political as well as ecclesiastical despotism. Wait and pray for a universal reformation of morals; and for a universal purity of heart and life.

Finally; how does it become all people who profess to believe the gospel, and to rely on the promises of God, to abound in prayer and hope, in a view of all that is before them! For notwithstanding his immutable purposes and promises, the Lord will be inquired of by his people; he will be sought unto, and trusted in; and not one of his precious promises will ever be fulfilled, but in answer to the effectual and fervent prayer of the faithful. "Lord, come quickly."....AMEN.



ESSAY XXXIV.

The Immortality of the Soul.

THAT the soul of man is immortal, is generally conceded, except by atheists. But, to guard ourselves and others against atheism, to which the corrupt heart is very liable, I propose to state some of the many arguments from scripture and reason, which prove that the soul will never die. Solemn is the consideration, and unspeakably animating to the friends and followers of Christ, that they shall exist, and that all their intellectual and moral faculties shall grow and expand, and that they shall increase in knowledge and holiness, and shall rise in glory and happiness for ever and ever! Who will not listen to evidence, in proof of this glorious doctrine? This doctrine is proved by the following arguments.

1. If man be not immortal, it does not appear, that this world was made for the most important purposes. The things of this world, considered as ultimate objects, appear to the contemplative mind, to be of very small importance. Those who attain to the highest worldly good,

gain but a bubble, compared with the extent of their capacities. And in the midst of their best hopes, and of their highest acquisitions, how many are there cut down and withered! "As for man, his days are as grass, as the flower of the field he passeth away." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Are things temporal the sole end for which man was made? and for which God made and governs the universe? Even an infidel ought to blush at so great an absurdity! Those who deny the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, scarcely ask themselves or others, for what purposes God made and governs the universe.

2. The soul of man is an immaterial existence, capable of surviving the body; and is evidently formed for immortality. It does not appear to be necessarily impaired, by the diseases and decays of animal nature. The human soul often manifests the greatest vigour and brilliancy, in the hour of death. "While the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed, day by day." Viewing the soul as immaterial, and aspiring after immortality; and viewing mankind in general, dying with strong anticipations of future and eternal scenes; we discover satisfactory evidence of the immortality of the soul.

3. Generally speaking, the human soul does but just begin to expand, and make improvement in this short and perplexed scene of life. Room is left for endless growth and progress in knowledge, virtue and happiness. If the soul perishes with the body, there is a broad basis for improvement, but next to no superstructure. Every infant that is carried to the grave, has been furnished, by the Creator, with a capacity to make improvement in eternity, inconceivably greater than was ever made by a Locke or a Newton in this life. Can we suppose, that such capacities are formed to be destroyed in embryo? to be extinguished almost as soon as they commence an existence? The supposition is most irrational and absurd. The soul of man is doubtless immortal. It will survive, not only its own mortal tenement; but also the whole material and perishable universe.

4. They who acknowledge the being of a God, and of his wise and holy government of the world, must acknowledge the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments, as a state of retribution. It is irrational to sup-

pose, that rewards and punishments are, by the dealings of Divine Providence in the present life, administered to mankind according to their deserts. In this life, the way of the wicked often prospers, and they are happy who deal very treacherously. The righteous are also frequently involved in great affliction and adversity. On this account, David was in deep perplexity, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and understood the end of the wicked. In the sanctuary, he was led to contemplate the future state of rewards and punishments; and in a view of this great and solemn scene, his mind was relieved. He saw how the divine character would be vindicated, by the administration of justice in the eternal state of retribution; and his pious soul was satisfied.

5. The doctrine of immortality is the only ground on which good morals can be supported.—Set aside this solemn doctrine, and the great body of mankind will adopt the libertine maxim, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Let us gratify every propensity of the heart, and of the mind; let us riot in carnal pleasures; for soon we shall be annihilated. Our existence and our memory will perish. Of all doctrines, that of annihilation has the greatest tendency to licentiousness. Take away all sense of accountability, and all fear of future punishment; and the principal motives to morality are destroyed. Present gratification will be the sole object of pursuit. Conscience will be seared as with a hot iron, and will cease to do its office. Can we suppose a doctrine to be true, which is not according to godliness? but which opens the floodgates of impiety and iniquity? Certainly not. By its moral tendency, every doctrine may be tested. If it produce good works, it is the doctrine of divine truth; but if it produce evil works, it is a false and heretical doctrine, a doctrine that leads to death.

We may now attend to what is taught us in the scriptures, concerning this solemn and interesting doctrine. In them we read, that “life and immortality are brought to light, through the gospel.” By the gospel of Christ, the immortality of the soul is more clearly revealed, than it was by the scriptures of the Old Testament. Speaking of the resurrection of the body, it is said by the Apostle, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Can we suppose, that

the body will put on immortality, and the soul be annihilated? This is an absurdity. From the scriptures it is evident, that the souls and bodies of the saints, after the resurrection and judgment, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; and that the souls and bodies of sinners shall depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

In the scriptures, the doctrine of a future retribution is clearly revealed. God will render to every one, according to his deeds. This implies the immortality of the soul. A heaven and a hell are often and familiarly spoken of in the scriptures; but these can exist, only in the eternal world. To inhabit one or the other, the soul must be immortal.

Very little account is made in scripture of the present life, only as a state of probation for a boundless eternity. But the very idea of *probation*, implies a future state of happiness or misery, according to men's characters.

Finally; The scriptures represent the Deity as a being possessed of every adorable perfection; and as a being who will display his glory in the view of all his intelligent creatures. But, in this world, "Clouds and darkness are round about him." His glory is, in a great measure, concealed from mortal eyes. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel." Millions of our mortal race die in infancy and childhood, millions in pagan darkness; and hitherto, but a small proportion of the human race, have even begun to see the glory of God. But it is unscriptural and unreasonable to suppose, that God will for ever conceal his glory from his rational and moral creation. For what purpose did he create the myriads of rational beings and moral agents; but that they might, here or hereafter, discover and celebrate his glory? But should the doctrine of the immortality of the soul prove false, the glory of God will for ever be concealed, and his veracity destroyed.

REMARKS.

1. The subject leads us to consider this life as nothing in comparison with a future and eternal state. It is but the beginning and infancy of our existence. Why should we magnify worldly objects or attainments? For, "what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose

his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it not infinitely more important, to provide for the immortal, than for the mortal part?

2. How thankful should we be, that we enjoy the precious privilege of a divine revelation, by which life and immortality are most clearly brought to light! How greatly are we distinguished, by the sovereign mercy of God, from the benighted heathen, who are perishing for lack of a knowledge of the way of salvation! On the great subject of the immortality of the soul, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."



ESSAY XXXV.

Death, and the Separate State.

HAVING proved the immortality of the soul, which is the joyful hope of all God's suffering saints, in this militant state; and which is alarming to the ungodly; it is proposed in the next place, to treat of the death of the body, and the separate state.

That we are all liable, every moment, to the arrest of death, and to the dissolution of our mortal bodies, is evident from universal experience and observation. This is a point, realized indeed by few; but denied by no one. It may be useful, however, to consider briefly, what things are implied in the death of the body. It implies a separation of the soul and body. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." "Dust thou art," as to the mortal body, "and unto dust shalt thou return." The dissolution of that mysterious union of soul and body, which was constituted in man's creation, is the main thing implied in death, as respects the soul. But the body, in consequence of this dissolution, returns to its primitive dust, and mingles with the common earth. The soul, at this important crisis, instead of returning to its primitive non-existence, returns to God who gave it. It then begins, as it were, to experience unretarded life and vigour; and to realize the solemn and awful scenes of the invisible world; *the world of unbodied spirits.*

Death, however, has its glooms and its terrors; particularly as respects those who are destitute of the faith

and hope of the gospel. It not only dissolves, in a moment, all worldly connections, and separates from all endearments of a worldly nature; but it concludes for ever, the day of probation, and the day of grace. O what need there is of that "Faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," in the solemn moment of exchanging worlds! How happy must they be, who in the exercise of a lively faith and hope in Jesus Christ, can sing, with humble confidence, the triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But infinitely terrible in his sight is the death of sinners.

Having dilated thus far, on the particular subject of death; we proceed to consider the separate state both of saints and sinners. By the separate state, is meant that state of existence, in which the soul and body are separate from each other; or the state of departed souls. The bodies of both saints and sinners, moulder down to common dust; in which state they will continue, till the resurrection, when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality."

With regard to the separate state of the soul, different opinions have been entertained. Some have supposed, that between death and the resurrection, mankind are in a state of dormancy, and insensibility. But it is as difficult to conceive of a motive to this opinion, as of an argument to support it. Sinners may imagine, that it affords to them a long reprieve from deserved punishment; but in this they are under a gross mistake: For, in a state of dormancy, time is wholly lost; so that the moment of death, would seem to be immediately connected with the moment of resurrection. On the part of the wicked, therefore, nothing is gained by this opinion; and on the part of the righteous, much is lost. They lose the privilege of being spectators of the wonderful works of divine providence and grace, down through the latter day of glory of the church, and to the resurrection of the dead, and the conflagration of the world.

But the more general opinion is, that the separate

state is a state of sensible existence ; a state of perfect holiness and happiness to the righteous ; and a state of perfect sinfulness and misery to the wicked. This opinion appears to be abundantly supported by the holy scriptures. " I heard a voice from heaven," says John the Revelator, " saying unto me, Write ; blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They are said to be *now blessed*, while they are in the congregation of the dead. They are blessed in particular, *from henceforth*, from and after the separation of the soul and the body, by natural death. " And their works do follow them." They commence, at their death, a glorious retribution ; and begin to reap the reward of all their labours, and toils, and sufferings in the cause of Christ. By this passage, the state of departed saints is explained ; and proved to be a state of high felicity.

The separate state of sinners is taught, with equal clearness, by the story of the rich man, and Lazarus. " Lazarus, the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried ; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." In his torments, he had a dialogue with Abraham, which proves, that neither he nor Abraham was in a state of dormancy. Call this a *parable*, if you please. Yet its design is to represent the matter as it is ; and it proves the separate state of the wicked, as well as that of the righteous, to be a state of sensibility ; and a state of awful retribution.

To the penitent, dying thief on the cross, Christ said, " To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." That there is a heavenly paradise, from which Christ came, and to which he and all his followers go, when they leave this world, is abundantly testified in the scriptures. To this glorious residence, the martyr Stephen desired to be received, when he prayed, in the agonies of death, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Here are the many mansions, provided for the accommodation of all that die in the faith.

In the Ecclesiastes, we have a plain account of death and the separate state. " Then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The plain meaning is, that at death, the spirit, or soul of man, instead of going into a long ob-

livion, returns to God immediately, to receive its destiny, as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. At death, the day of probation is finally closed, and the destiny of saints and sinners, which will be confirmed publicly at the day of judgment, is established.

If we cast an eye over the revelations made to the Apostle John, we shall find superabundant evidence of the sensible existence and activity of the souls of mankind, between death and the final judgment. Visions of the heavenly state, in which the saints in glory are seen and heard, celebrating the glory of God and the Lamb, are a clear and decisive evidence of their sensible existence, and high felicity. The souls of the martyrs, in particular, are said to cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." We have an account of one of the heavenly messengers expressly declaring himself to be of the human race. "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, the prophets; and of them that keep the sayings of this book."

There is, on the whole, no want of evidence of the sensible existence of all the dead, both saints and sinners, in the state of separation from their mortal bodies. The Apostle Paul, anticipating the glories of the heavenly state, had a desire to depart, not into a state of oblivion, till the resurrection of the dead; but to *be with Jesus*. He desired "to be absent from the body, that he might be present with the Lord." The expectation of Paul was, that immediately after the death of his body, he should find himself in the glorious presence of his divine Redeemer, celebrating his praise, with innumerable hosts of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. And this was a just and reasonable expectation. For the souls of men, whether in or out of the body, are capable of beholding the astonishing and glorious events of divine providence and grace in this world. Here they can witness the displays of the power and glory of God, in the protection and progress of his church, notwithstanding the temporary triumphs of the adversary. Even in the separate state, they will be witnesses of the conquest of Satan, and of the universal triumph of truth. They will be witnesses of the last efforts of the adversary, and be prepared to concur in the final judgment of the world.

ESSAY XXXVI.

The Resurrection of the Dead.

THE two great and concluding subjects, in the system of divine truth, are *the resurrection, and final judgment.*

That there will be, at the end of the world, a resurrection of the dead, both of saints and sinners, "the just and the unjust," is a doctrine clearly revealed in the holy scriptures; and a doctrine highly interesting and important. For, should this prove false, the gospel system must, of course, fall to the ground. But, that death and hell, or death and the grave, and the earth and the seas, shall deliver up the dead that are in them, is plainly declared, as it was revealed to the Apostle John. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and the existence of angels and spirits; and who held to annihilation; were confuted by the quotation of what the Lord said to Moses in the bush; "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not a God of the dead, but of the living." These patriarchs must have been in existence, and in hopes of the resurrection, when the Saviour made these declarations; or the Lord could not then have been their living and true God.

In the Old Testament, are found several testimonies of the resurrection of the dead. Speaking of bodily death, Job says, "Man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more;" plainly implying, that when the heavens shall be no more, when they shall pass away, with a great noise; and when the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; then shall man rise from the dead. "I know," says Job, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand, at the latter day, upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms shall destroy this body; yet in my flesh, I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself and not another, though my reins shall be consumed within me." "I shall be satisfied," says the Psalmist, "when I awake with thy likeness." Alluding to this the Apostle teaches us, that the bodies of the saints, in the resurrection, will be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. In the prophecy of Isaiah, the doctrine of the resurrection is suggested in these words,

“He will swallow up death in victory.” Paul makes an application of these words to the doctrine of the resurrection. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The solemn testimony of Christ to the doctrine of the resurrection is this: “Verily, verily I say unto you; the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” This doctrine was well understood by the followers of Christ. Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed that her brother should rise again, replied, “I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection, at the last day.” By the Apostles, the resurrection of the dead was considered as a capital doctrine; constituting an important part of their ministerial labour. They preached, “through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead.” With the Sadducees and proud philosophers, they had much debate on this subject. Some mocked; some said, “The resurrection is past already.” Others said, “The thing is incredible, because it is unphilosophical. This was a plausible objection; but, by the way, the scriptures do not consider the resurrection of the dead as an operation of the laws of nature; but as an immediate effect of infinite power. In this view, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?” Jesus Christ, beyond all doubt, is risen from the dead. He was as evidently alive, from the third, to the fortieth day after his crucifixion, as at any period of his incarnation! He was often seen by his disciples; ate, drank, and conversed with all his intimate friends. It is said, “He was seen by many infallible witnesses.” He taught and commissioned his Apostles; “Go, teach all nations.” And, by them he was seen to ascend to glory. It is on the ground of Christ’s resurrection, that the gospel has been supported, and the church has been established. Had there been no resurrection of the dead, Christ could not have been raised; and, says the Apostle, “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” If Christ be not risen from the dead, it is altogether unaccountable, how

his weak and trembling followers could have had influence to propagate such a doctrine and belief, among the learned Jews and Romans: and how this doctrine could have been embraced and supported, by all the wise and candid, down to this day. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ being proved, it establishes the doctrine of the resurrection of all the dead. According to divine testimony, "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." Christ was the first begotten from the dead; the first fruits of them that slept in the grave. He being raised, the resurrection of all the dead is amply secured.

The doctrine of the resurrection being understood and established; we proceed to consider the manner of this wonderful work of God. All that we can understand, or need to learn of the manner of this divine operation, is stated distinctly, in the noted 1 Cor. xv. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool; that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." The object of the sower is *the crop*. But without the dissolution of the seed, there can be no crop. It is added; "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain." Thou sowest not the crop, which springs and vegetates from the seed; but barely the seed itself, whatever it be; whether it be wheat, or any other grain. It is added, "But God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body." Although God, by his own sovereign agency, produces the crop; yet, as in all his works, he observes a strict order and consistency. He never produces cockle from the seed of wheat; nor wheat from the seed of cockle. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

On this wonderful and mysterious subject, it is added, "There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Of these different bodies, we can have but a faint conception, till an actual resurrection explains the subject. One thing is clear however, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Doubtless the celestial and spiritual body is different, in its essential properties from the natural and material body: for it is incorruptible,

and durable as eternity—capable of endless bliss, or endless woe.

The Apostle proceeds to state the doctrine of the resurrection, as it respects that generation, which shall be found alive, at the coming of Christ to Judgment. “Behold! I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep.” A whole generation, consisting of saints and sinners, shall be found alive, at the coming of Christ, with all his holy angels. All the wicked will be found in arms, surrounding *the camp of the saints*, and the beloved city, which is the church of Christ, ready to devour the holy seed. On all these, “fire will come down from God out of heaven and destroy them.” With all the wicked of former ages, they will then rise “to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Far different will be the case, as respects the saints of that last generation. Like Enoch and Elijah, they shall be translated, and shall not see death. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” All the saints then alive, shall in an instant, be changed into an incorruptible state, like that of the saints who shall have experienced both death and the resurrection. For, it is added, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Saints and sinners will be equally incorruptible and immortal. This great change will take place at the end of the world; as preparatory to the final judgment. For it is said, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, and with the voice of the Archangel,” who is Jesus Christ; “and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” They shall rise before the living saints shall be changed. “Then we,” meaning the saints who shall be alive and remain at the end of the world, “we that are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This is the scriptural account of the resurrection of the saints, who have enjoyed the blessedness of those who *die in the Lord*. Their resurrection is glorious. For their very bodies, as we have found, will be raised in consummate beauty and splendour; *fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body*; and

fitted for perfect and eternal felicity. Well may the suffering saints on earth be “looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” “Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Thus, at the end of the material world, all, both bad and good, must be raised to immortality; and must bid adieu to all that is terrestrial. These bodies, mouldered to atoms, are to be reanimated, and made spiritual, although distinguished from the soul. A re-union of the soul and body will be a pre-requisite to the final judgment, and to the great awards of the eternal world. The doctrine of the resurrection, though it may seem to some unessential, to others incredible, and to all mysterious; was laboured by the Apostles, as a most discriminating point—a point on which the whole gospel scheme was suspended. Reject this doctrine, therefore, and to be consistent, the whole book of divine revelation is to be rejected.



ESSAY XXXVII.

The Final Judgment.

HAVING briefly discussed the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, one great end of which is, that all mankind may be made to appear, in their true character, before the judgment seat of Christ; we now proceed to the doctrine of the final judgment of the world.

On this great and interesting doctrine, the holy scriptures are very plain and explicit; as might well be expected, since it is a doctrine made known, only by divine revelation. This doctrine, when revealed to mankind by divine inspiration, appears, on many accounts, to be highly reasonable and important; but without a revelation from God, it could never have been determined, whether it were reasonably to be expected or not; or whether it were expedient or inexpedient that God should judge the world. In the light of the holy scriptures, we clearly see it to be of infinite importance, that God should bring all his rational and accountable creatures before his judg-

ment seat, that he might make a public display of his infinite wisdom, righteousness, goodness, mercy and faithfulness in his administrations. It is highly important, not only that God should *do right*, but also, that he should *display* his righteousness, in all his administrations, and in the view of all his intelligent creatures. And, in what way can this be done more effectually, than by a full and complete exhibition of every character, before the assembled universe? Accordingly it is written, and by all candid minds, it is believed, that "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." It is also written and believed that "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The moral improvement of this doctrine is in the next words: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Another statement of the doctrine before us, is in these words: "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." "This," saith Solomon, "is the conclusion of the whole matter." The inference is, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

In these passages of scripture, three ideas are prominent. 1. That *all will appear in judgment*, without the possibility of escape. "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth." The sea, as well as the earth shall deliver up its dead. Even though the mountains fall on some, and the hills cover them; yet the mountains and hills shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." The material world shall be annihilated. All the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and all shall come to judgment.

2. Another idea is, that *every work*, good or bad, every moral exercise, *every secret thing*, good or evil, and however deeply concealed by falsehood or hypocrisy, will be fully brought to light, by the heart-searching God. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give unto every man according as his work shall be."

3. Another idea is, That *the judgment of the world belongs to Christ.* “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” The Son of God is to be the Judge of the world; by which it appears beyond all controversy, that the Son of God is divine, and is Jehovah. It is God who judgeth the secrets of men. But he does this great work *by Jesus Christ.* Christ is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. So that the great Judge of the world is to be a visible God and Judge. “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who have pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Oh, who can stand before his indignation! When Christ appears in the clouds of heaven, he will appear in the same form in which he ascended, in the presence of his disciples. Accordingly, when his disciples saw him ascend to glory, it was announced to them by the attending angels, that “this same Jesus, who was taken up from them into heaven, should so come, in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.”

By Matthew, the Evangelist, we have the most plain and literal account of the coming of Christ, at the last great day, and of the process of the final judgment. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say to those on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, thirsty, and ye gave me drink, naked, and ye clothed me.” In this world, they had expressed their friendship to Christ by deeds of charity to his followers. “Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat, thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;” but ye have exhibited a character in this life, unfriendly to your brethren, and to your Saviour, who is to be your final judge. The conclusion is,

that "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Thus it appears, that Christ will be the Judge of the world; and that the judgment will be administered according to the character which is formed in the present life; which is the only probationary state. All beyond is *endless joy or endless pain*.

Of how long duration the day of judgment will be, we know not. Suppose it to be a thousand years, according to human reckoning of time; this, according to the figurative style of the scriptures, may be called a day. Such may any period of time be denominated, whether definite or indefinite. The period will doubtless be of sufficient duration for the trial and adjudication of all the holy angels, men and devils. For, when Christ shall come in his glory, he will bring all his holy angels with him; and it is said, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." "And the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." All these, together with the unnumbered millions of the human family, will have their whole characters so fully investigated, that they will appear to the assembled universe, in their true light. Probably, in the resurrection state, when mortal man shall have put on immortality, and when death shall be swallowed up of life, mankind will be made capable of a very rapid and intuitive discovery and comprehension of characters presented to their view. Yet, being finite and limited in their conceptions, they must comprehend objects, and measure time, only by succession. This being the case, a common *day* would be insufficient for so great a work, as that of the final judgment of the world. Further,

In the minds of many, it is doubtful whether the sins of the redeemed, or of the saints, will be brought to light, in the final judgment. Their sins are said to be not only forgiven and pardoned; but also to be *blotted out, covered, and remembered no more*. In reply to this, it may be observed, that these particular expressions are evidently designed to teach us the full, final and absolute pardon of the sins of the penitent; rather than their being for-

gotten, in a literal sense ; or blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. That God should forget our transgressions, and not literally remember our sins, is absolutely impossible. These expressions, therefore, are doubtless used in a metaphorical sense. But when it is said, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil ;" there is no appearance of metaphor. These words do not admit of any other construction but that which is literal. The testimony is plain, that the whole character of every individual, whether saint or sinner, shall be fully exhibited. This, in numberless instances, will be found necessary to a full and perfect exhibition of the character of sinners. Saints and sinners are often connected together, more or less, in sinful conduct : So that, to reveal the sins of one, necessarily reveals the sins of the other. To bring to view the sins and imperfections of the saints, in the final judgment, will be also necessary, that their various degrees of glory may appear to be just and right. To expose to view the sins of the saints, at the day of judgment, will be necessary to a proper manifestation of their repentance, faith, humility, meekness and hope in Christ ; and of the riches of divine grace, in their forgiveness and salvation. Nor will any christian, who is made perfect in glory, be at all unwilling, that God should glorify himself, and display his justice and his grace, in bringing every one of his works into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

It hence appears, that the day of judgment, and final retribution, will be a very great, solemn, and interesting day. It will reveal the secrets of all hearts ; and terminate in the final and unspeakable blessedness of all the saints ; and in the perdition of ungodly men.

Not only will the glory of God be most richly displayed, by the final result of the great day of accounts ; but rebellion will be crushed for ever. It will never more be excited against the holy kingdom of Jehovah. Nor will the state of finite beings ever again be altered. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold I come quickly," says the great Judge, "and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as

his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Such will be the result of the great day of final awards. It will issue in the consummate glory and felicity of all the saints and holy angels, in the New-Jerusalem; and in the perdition of all the ungodly. The same result is stated by the Apostle Paul. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled," to recompense "rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Every account of the resurrection and final judgment, which is contained in the bible, comes to the same result. So that there remains no hope of the restoration and salvation of those who die in their sins. But "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth," *and for ever....AMEN.*

QUESTIONS

ADAPTED TO THE

FOREGOING SYSTEM.



ESSAY I.—*Evidence of the Being of a God.*—Page 13.

What is meant by a God? What is the first argument to prove the existence of such a Being? By what passage of Scripture is this argument supported? How does it appear, that we, and all things which we behold, are finite and dependent, and must have a cause? How does it appear, that the great Cause of all things is an *intelligent* Being? What is the second argument?—the third? What is there in the Bible, which proves that it is the work of God? What are the fourth and fifth arguments? What follows from the belief and acknowledgment of a Supreme Being?

ESSAY II.—*The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.*—Page 19.

From what two considerations does it appear likely, that God has, some where, given a revelation of himself to man? On what accounts does man need a revelation? Of what kinds are the evidences of a divine revelation? What is the first argument of an *external* kind? What is a miracle? What miracles have been wrought in confirmation of divine truth? What *standing* miracles are there? What is the second argument? To what do most of the prophecies relate? What prophecies are remarkably fulfilling at the present day? What is the first argument of an *internal* kind, to prove the divine original of the Bible? What is the second argument?—the third—fourth—fifth—sixth—seventh—eighth—ninth? What remarks may be made on this subject?

ESSAY III.—*The Perfections of God.*—Page 32.

What are the *natural* perfections of God? What is the sum and substance of all the *moral* perfections of God? In what does the Goodness of God consist? How does it appear, that God is, in the strictest sense, *eternal*? From what does the *immutability* of God result? What are we to understand by the *omnipotence* of God? How may we prove the omnipotence of God? What is meant by *omniscience*? How does it appear that God is omniscient? How does it appear that he is *independent*? What passages of Scripture can you bring to prove, that each of these perfections belongs to God; and also that he is *invisible* and *infinite*? In what does *holiness* consist? What are the distinct moral perfections of God? In what does the *justice* of God consist? In what does his *mercy* consist? In what does infinite *wisdom* consist? In what does his *truth* and *faithfulness* consist? How does it appear that God is faithful and true?

ESSAY IV.—*The Unity and Trinity of the Godhead.*—Page 43.

What do the Scriptures say respecting the unity of the Godhead? From what other considerations is it evident? From what pas-

sages in the Old Testament does it appear, that there is a plurality in the Godhead? What three passages in the Old Testament prove the doctrine of the Trinity? What passages in the New Testament prove this doctrine? How did Christ speak on this subject? How does it appear that Christ is God? How does it appear that the Holy Spirit is God? If the doctrine of the Trinity be groundless, what must follow? What remarks and inferences are suggested by this subject?

ESSAY V.—*The work of Creation.*—Page 50.

What is meant by the work of creation? How may we prove from reason, that the material world had a beginning? When was the great work of creation performed? What is the extent of the work of creation? What was the process and order of this great work? When were the angels probably created? In what state were all creatures and things produced? What was probably the original form of the earth? What was the cause of its present form? What remarks may be made on this subject?

ESSAY VI.—*God's works of Providence.*—Page 60.

What are God's works of Providence? What passages of Scripture prove that there is such a Providence? How minute and particular do the scriptures declare the Providence of God to be? How does it appear that the Providence of God extends to the hearts and actions of men—even of sinful men? In what does free agency consist? What is the first inference from the doctrine of divine Providence?—the second?—third? What is matter of great consolation? What is the fourth inference?

ESSAY VII.—*The Sovereignty of God.*—Page 67.

In what does the sovereignty of God consist? What is the objection against absolute sovereignty in human governments? Of what kind is the *divine* sovereignty? What did Christ say respecting the sovereignty of God? What has the Apostle Paul said? In what particulars is the sovereignty of God strikingly manifested? What is the first remark on this subject? What are we to think of those who reject the term *sovereignty*? What is the second remark? Without the sovereignty of God, what would be the consequence?

ESSAY VIII.—*The Decrees of God.*—Page 72.

What passage of Scripture proves that the providence and decree of God extend to all things? What constitute the decrees of God? What other passages of Scripture prove the doctrine of divine decrees? How does the foreknowledge of God prove his decrees? What is prophecy, and how does it prove the decrees of God? What passages of Scripture prove, that the decrees of God extend to events which are brought about by human wickedness? Is the doctrine of decrees a comfortable doctrine? How is the doctrine of decrees evident from reason? Of what are the decrees of God the fruit? What is said respecting the means, by

which all events are accomplished? What is said respecting divine and human agency? What is the last remark on this subject?

ESSAY IX.—*The original Character, and State of Man.*—Page 81.

What sort of a being was man, when first created? How does it appear that he was not of a *mixed* character? In what did that image of God consist, in which man was created? What was the state of mankind, in which they were created? What were probably the expectations of our first parents, as to the future? What are we led to notice, in the first place, in a review of this subject? What do we learn, in a further view of this subject?

ESSAY X.—*The Moral Law, or Covenant of Works.*—Page 86.

On whom is the moral law binding?—and what does it require? To what measure of love and regard is every being entitled? What prohibitions and requirements are there in the Word of God which belong not to the law of nature? What would have been the consequence, if our first parents had abstained from the forbidden fruit, during a suitable time of probation? What is the penalty of the divine law? What does the threatening of death to transgressors mean? What other opinions have there been respecting the threatened death? What are we to think respecting the *bodies* of the wicked, in a future state? What was the condition of eternal life, under the covenant of works? What do we learn from this subject?

ESSAY XI.—*The Temptation and Fall of Man.*—Page 92.

What is the *mystery* respecting the fall of man? What are we to understand by the *serpent* that tempted Eve? How did he commence his temptation? Why did Eve partake of the forbidden fruit? Did she sin before she actually eat? What did reason and prudence dictate to Eve, when under the temptation? How was Adam induced to eat of the forbidden fruit? Which of our first parents was the most guilty? What is the first consideration, which casts light on this subject? What is the second consideration? What should be kept in mind, in thinking and speaking on this subject?

ESSAY XII.—*Total Depravity.*—Page 100.

What is the opinion vindicated by our author, on this subject? What indications did Adam give of total depravity, immediately after the fall? How is this further evident from the threatening to our first parents? How does it appear that Adam and Eve embraced a Saviour? What is the first divine testimony respecting the depravity of man? What other testimonies do we find in Scripture? How does the doctrine of regeneration prove the total depravity of man? What then is the state and condition of mankind, in consequence of their apostasy?

ESSAY XIII.—*Original Sin.*—Page 105.

What three opinions have been entertained respecting Original Sin? How did the first sin of Adam involve his posterity in a

state of sin and ruin? Which of the three opinions on this subject, is the correct one? What is it which renders it proper, to call this sinful state of mankind *Original Sin*? What passages of Scripture prove, that mankind are, from their birth, possessed of a sinful character? What is the next argument to prove the doctrine of original sin? What is the third argument?—the fourth—fifth—sixth? What remarks may be made on this subject?

ESSAY XIV.—*Redemption*.—Page 111.

Who were the parties in the Covenant of Redemption? What were the great objects engaged to be accomplished, in this covenant? What is God the Father represented as doing, in this great work? What has the Son done? What part belonged to the Spirit? What passages of Scripture allude to the covenant of Redemption? What is the first remark on this subject? From what does the redemption of sinners materially differ? How does it appear, that redemption by the blood of Christ was absolutely necessary? What is the fourth remark?—the fifth? By what is redemption effected? By what considerations does this appear?

ESSAY XV.—*Regeneration*.—Page 119.

Why do not mankind readily comply with the gospel? What is Regeneration? By what similitudes is regeneration expressed, in the Word of God? By whose agency is this great work effected? From what does the necessity of regeneration result? In what does moral inability consist? What is said respecting regeneration's being an *instantaneous* change? What is said about its being *perceptible*? What means does God use with those, whom he is about to regenerate? What is meant, when it is said, that regeneration is an *unconditional* work of God? Are men *active*, or *passive*, in regeneration?

ESSAY XVI.—*The Doctrine of Election*.—Page 127.

How may the doctrine of election be stated? How is this doctrine evident, in the first place?—the second—third—fourth—last? What passages of Scripture prove, that God's election is from eternity? On what account are the elect chosen to salvation? How does it appear that no man is elected, at all events? How does it appear, that by electing a part of mankind, God does no injustice to the rest? How does it appear, that in his election, God is not a respecter of persons? How does it appear, that this doctrine is consistent with the free offers and invitations of the gospel? Is the doctrine of election a *discouraging* doctrine?

ESSAY XVII.—*Reprobation, and the Unpardonable Sin*.—Page 134.

What is meant by God's decree of reprobation? What else is established, by the eternal purpose of God, respecting the non-elect? In what manner are sinners hardened? What passages of scripture suggest to us the doctrine of an actual reprobation of heart? In what does the *unpardonable* sin consist? What *three* things are necessary to constitute this sin? Who came very near committing this sin; and why was his sin not the unpardonable

sin? Who actually committed this sin; and how did they commit it? In what different ways may the sin unto death be committed? Why is this sin declared to be unpardonable? What persons, may we conclude, have not committed this sin? Is this sin committed by many; and at the present day? What is said respecting all the sin of the finally impenitent? What is incumbent on all sinners, in the view of this subject?

ESSAY XVIII.—*Repentance and Conversion.*—Page 143.

What is Repentance, according to the most literal meaning of the word? What is it, according to the strict meaning of the word, in the original language? What is conversion? What are repentance and conversion, as distinguishable from each other? What do repentance and conversion imply? What is the first remark on this subject? What passages of Scripture prove, that repentance and conversion are the gift of God? What is the third remark?—the fourth—the last?

ESSAY XIX.—*The Christian Faith.*—Page 148.

What is the primary and literal meaning of the word *faith*? To what things has it respect? What is the most correct definition of faith, which we find in the Scriptures? What is a summary of the things stated, on this subject? In what words have we a lively description of this faith? What does the joy of Christian faith arise from? What the natural and genuine effect of faith? Which is first, repentance, or faith? What is the last remark?

ESSAY XX.—*Justification by Faith.*—Page 154.

What is Justification in its *primary* sense? What is *Gospel* justification? What is the great thing necessary to gospel justification? What four things are implied in the doctrine of justification? What is the difference between justification by faith and justification by works? What great error have some held, on this subject? What impropriety of expression has there been, on this subject? What has this doctrine a strong tendency to promote?

ESSAY XXI.—*Perseverance.*—Page 160.

What other doctrines imply and prove the doctrine of perseverance? If the perseverance of all individual saints be insecure, what consequences follow? What passages of Scripture establish the doctrine of perseverance? What is the first remark on this subject?—the second?—the third?

ESSAY XXII.—*Self-denial, and True Benevolence.*—Page 166.

What is Self-denial?—By what is it taught? What does self-denial *not* mean? What is said about private good? In what does a great and distinguishing part of this duty consist? What is not to be understood by loving our enemies? What is the first remark on this subject?—the second?

ESSAY XXIII.—*Submission to God.*—Page 172.

On what account is it important, that this subject be well investigated? What *eight* things are implied in submission to God? From what *three* considerations does our obligation to be submissive to God arise?

ESSAY XXIV.—*Prayer and Praise.*—Page 176.

To whom is prayer to be addressed? In what does it consist? On what condition are we allowed to ask God to be merciful? In what consists the chief excellency of prayer? What encouragement have we to pray? What is said respecting associations for special prayer? To what has a great part of the importunate prayer of Christians respect? How is prayer consistent with the immutable purposes of Jehovah? What remarkable answers to prayer are recorded in the Bible? What is the first remark on this subject? What is said of singing the praises of the Lord? What is the last remark?

ESSAY XXV.—*Duties of the Unregenerate, and the Means of Grace.*—Page 186.

What is the testimony of the Scriptures respecting the doings of the unregenerate? What is the meaning of these Scripture declarations? How is the question to be answered, *is it the duty of impenitent sinners to pray; or to attempt any religious duties?* Is it proper to say that sinners can perform the *matter* of duty acceptably, when the *manner* and *spirit* of it are wrong? Does God require the same of sinners, that he does of saints? What is said of those who shun and despise the special means of grace? What is to be understood when we say, that impenitent sinners ought to pray, and attempt other duties? Dissuade all impenitent sinners from religious instruction, and what will be the consequence? Why is it more probable that those, who attend to the external duties of religion, will be converted, than those who do not? Why may not impenitent sinners come to the Lord's table, as well as to the throne of grace? What is the first and immediate duty of all sinners? When only are means efficacious? Are the means of grace necessary to salvation? What is a gross and dangerous delusion, on this subject? What are the support and comfort of all sinners?

ESSAY XXVI.—*The Holy Sabbath.*—Page 198.

What is the first argument to prove, that the Church has now a Sabbath? What is the second argument, in support of the law of the Sabbath? What is the third argument? Why is not the New Testament more copious, on the subject of the Sabbath? What do reason and experience teach, on this subject? What is the fourth argument?—the fifth—the last? What passages of Scripture prove the Change of the Sabbath? From what other consideration, is this change evident? What does the law of the Sabbath prohibit? What are the duties of the Sabbath? What is the first remark on this subject? What is the second remark?

ESSAY XXVII.—*The Ministry of the Word.*—Page 209.

What is meant by the *Word of God*? What is meant by the *Ministry of the Word*? What is said of the ministry of the word, and a faithful and persevering attention to it? Where is this subject illustrated? How may it be further established? Where do we find a solemn charge to ministers to be faithful? How does it appear, that people are bound to hear the gospel? What awful warning has God given to those, who envy, hate, and despise his ministers? What is evident from the history of the labours and sufferings of the first ministers of the gospel? What five inferences from this subject?

ESSAY XXVIII.—*Evidences of Piety.*—Page 224.

What passages of Scripture teach us, that we may have evidence of piety in ourselves and others? What is the first thing which is mentioned, as evidence of true piety? What is said of love to the brethren? In what does the sum total of the evidence of grace consist? What are the commandments of Christ, by obedience to which, we are to evidence our piety?

ESSAY XXIX.—*The Christian Church.*—Page 228.

What constitutes the *invisible Church*? What is the *visible church*? What does the term *church* mean, in its most common and appropriate sense? How many orders of ministers are there in the church? What passages of Scripture prove, that the office of an *elder*, and of a *bishop*, are the same? What other officer is there in the church? What is the duty of a Deacon? What number of deacons ought there to be in a church? What must we be able to do, in order to unite consistently with the church of Christ? What two considerations prove, that saving faith is a necessary qualification for admission as a member of the visible church?

ESSAY XXX.—*The Ordinance of Baptism.*—Page 235.

How long has baptism been used in the church? What passage of Scripture points out the meaning of circumcision, and its sameness with baptism? What is baptism a sign of? What is the condition of Christian baptism? How do you prove that the infant seed, or households, of believers, are proper subjects of Christian baptism? What is one of the precious blessings of the covenant of grace? What was the idea, from the beginning of the world, on this subject? What is said respecting the posterity of godly parents? What is said of the salvation of Noah's family? In what relation do baptized children stand to the visible church? (Answer, *negatively*, in three particulars; and then *positively*.) What obligations are brought on children by their baptism? What should be the treatment of baptized children? What is said of those who are past the age of minority? What is said of the mode of baptism? Where do we learn the doctrine of Immersion? What two inferences may be made from the doctrine of Infant baptism?

ESSAY XXXI.—*The Lord's Supper.*—Page 249.

Was Judas present at the institution of the Lord's supper? What do the bread and wine represent? What is the design of this sacrament? What affections are excited, in view of this ordinance? What must we do, if we would avoid a perversion of this ordinance? Ought a member of the church to commune at the Lord's table, having a certain knowledge, but no means of proof, that one or more of the communicants are guilty of censurable crimes? Is it proper for those who are under a course of discipline, to be indulged with Christian communion? When there are great difficulties in churches, ought they not frequently to suspend the communion, until those difficulties can be healed?

ESSAY XXXII.—*Church Government.*—Page 254.

Ought churches to act alone, in ecclesiastical matters? Where do we find the government of the church, as it respects the disci-

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pline of offenders, clearly stated? To whom does the power of excluding members belong? What is the form of church government, which is found in the gospel? Is there such an officer as a *ruling elder* in the church, distinct from a pastor? What is said of the right of a presbytery? What duties belong to the presbytery? Of what is a Consociation composed? What is the business of consociations? What is said of the decisions of a consociation? What is there in scripture respecting the mode of forming presbyteries and consociations? What advantages may arise from a general Association? How are those to be treated who are cut off from the church? What is meant by the prohibition, 1 Cor. 5, 11? What is the condition of an excommunicated person? What is the design of excommunication? What remarks on this subject?

ESSAY XXXIII.—*The Millennium*.—Page 267.

How does it appear that the duration of the latter day glory will be a thousand years? What is meant by the *last days*, in Scripture prophecy? What passages of scripture prove the restoration of the Jews? From what considerations is the restoration of Israel further evident? What is meant by the armies of Gog and Magog—*Ezek.* 38 and 39,—and what will they do? In what will the peculiar glory and felicity of the Millennium consist? How extensive will the blessedness of the Millennium be? What is the first remark on this subject?—the final reflection?

ESSAY XXXIV.—*The immortality of the Soul*.—Page 279.

What five arguments prove the immortality of the soul? What do the Scriptures teach on this subject? What is the first remark?—the second?

ESSAY XXXV.—*Death, and the Separate State*.—Page 283.

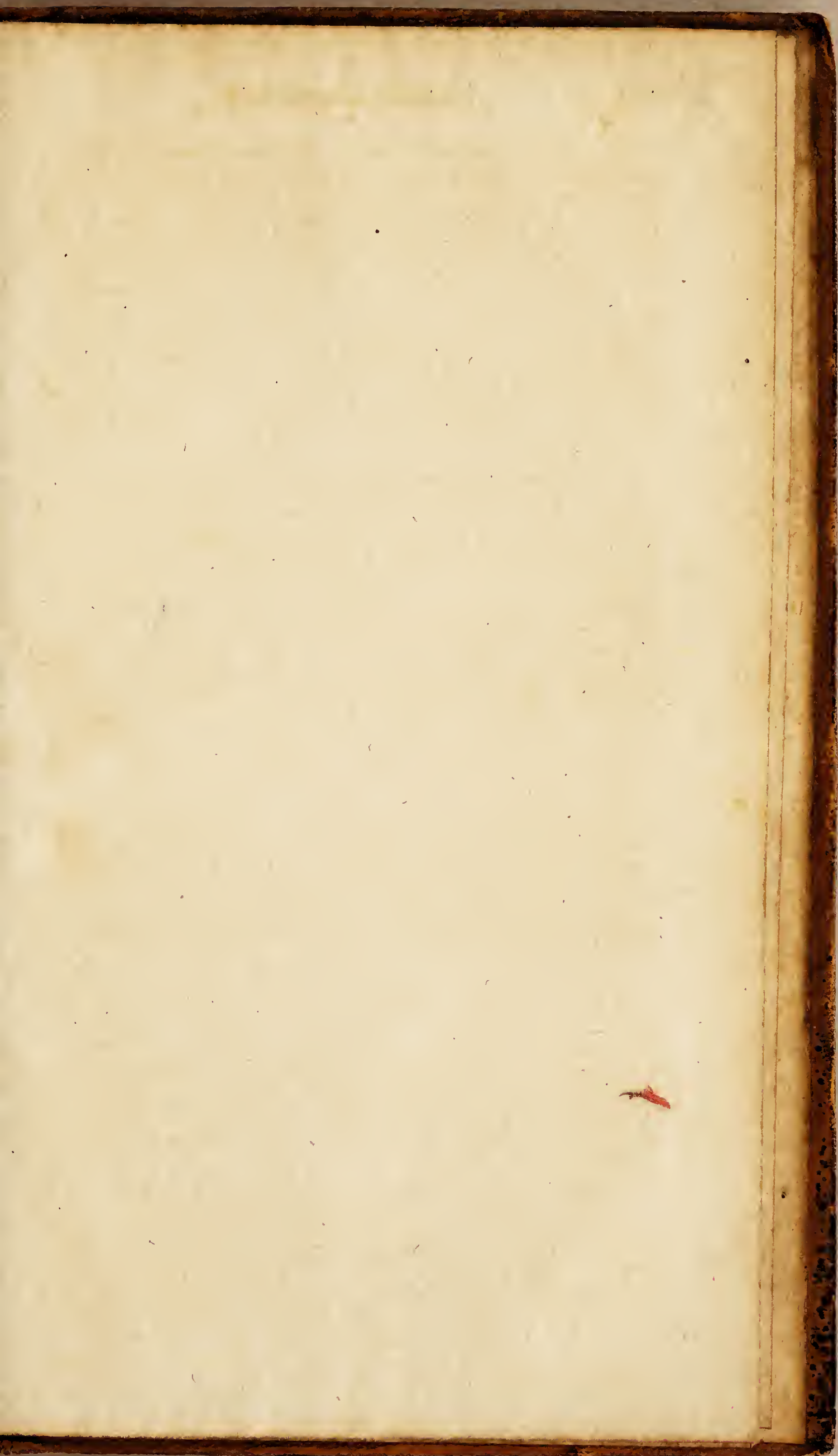
What becomes of the soul when the body dies? What is meant by the separate state? What is the more general opinion respecting the separate state? What passages of Scripture support this opinion? What is the testimony of St. Paul on this subject?

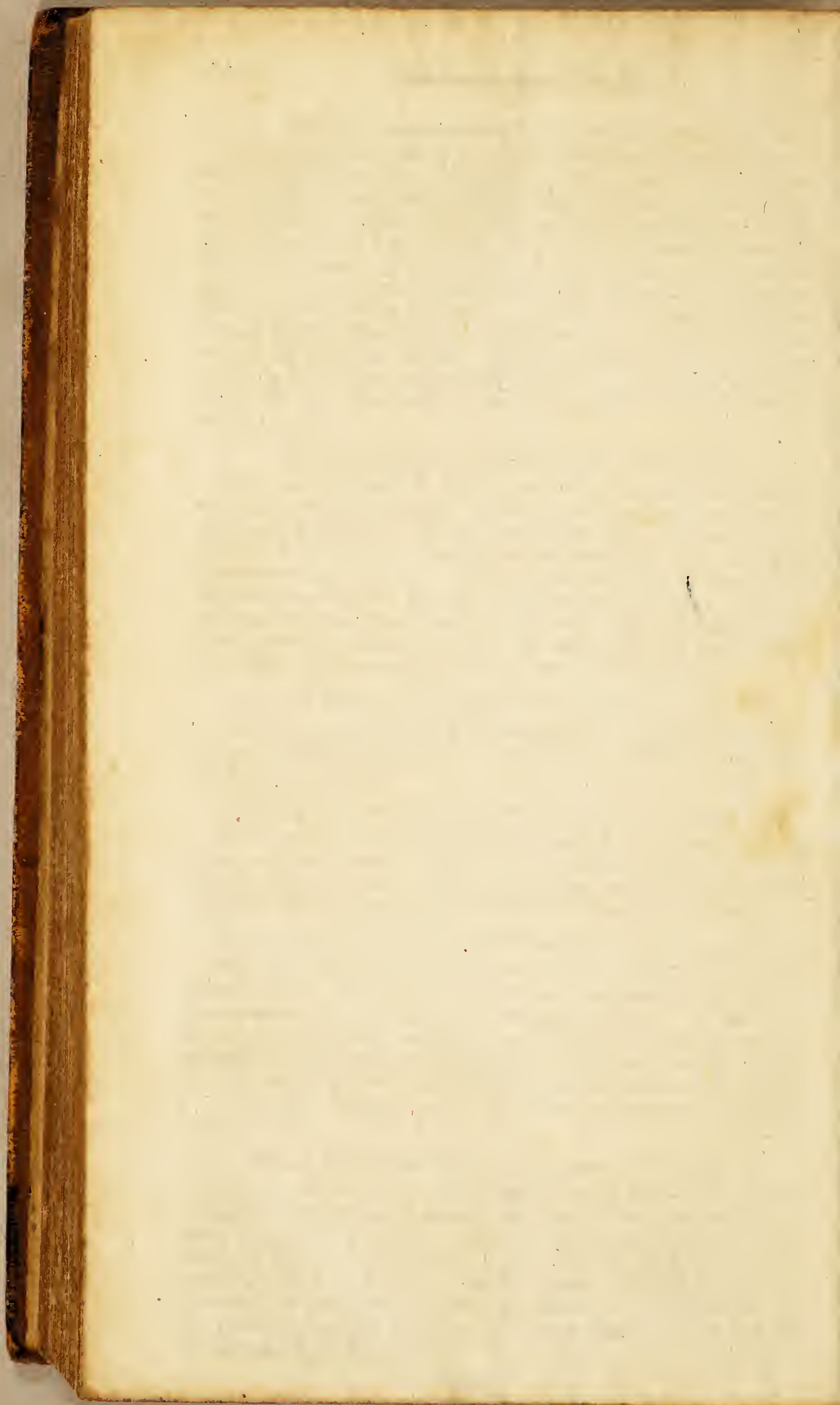
ESSAY XXXVI.—*The Resurrection of the Dead*.—Page 287.

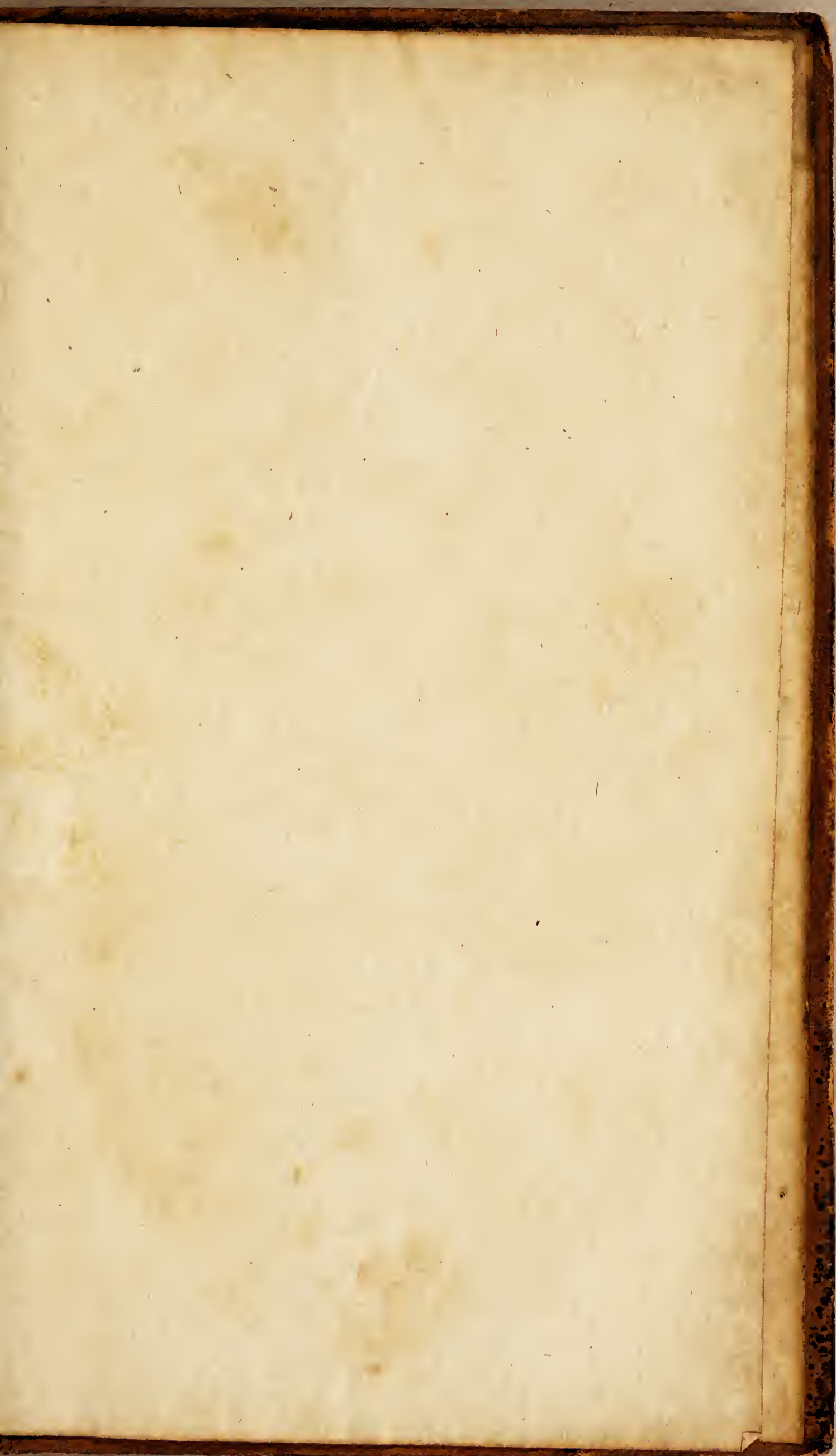
What do we find in the Old Testament, in support of this doctrine? What do we find in the New Testament? By what is this doctrine established in the strongest manner? Where have we an account of the manner in which the dead will be raised; and what is *there* said on this subject? What will become of the last generation of men? What kind of a resurrection will that of the saints be? Reject the doctrine of the resurrection, and what will follow?

ESSAY XXXVII.—*The final Judgment*.—Page 291.

What is one great end of the resurrection of the dead? What is said of the doctrine of a final judgment? What do the Scriptures say on this subject? What three ideas are prominent, in these passages of Scripture? What does St. Matthew say respecting the process of the final judgment? What is said respecting the duration of the day of judgment? Will the sins of the saints be brought to light, in the final judgment? How will the day of judgment issue?









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